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FLOOD

BY ROBERT NEUMANN

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY WILLIAM A. DRAKE

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IN MEMORY OF MY FATHER
SAMUEL NEUMANN
1859-1927

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PROLOGUE

THE HOUSE

CHILDREN

TORN out of the abyss of night, dragged along the desolate highway of dead years, they crowd about me—death-masks and the faces of children.

The little iron crib standing against the wall was enameled white, with the figures of angels at head and foot—guardians of sleep, sentinels of repose. When the railing was put up, the crib was a room which one had all to oneself; cozy, shut off from everything, with only the ceiling, with the long crack in its plaster, to look down from above, like a far-off sky. Beneath it was a narrow border, blue as the summer air, and under that the calculated prodigality of marvelous painted flowers in a pattern that assumed an eternal swaying and struggling. There was a gash in this immensity, a deep hole left in the wall by a huge iron hook that used to be there. The little hand straying out between the bars could go feeling around in the jagged mysteriousness of this whitish cavity in the blue paint, and small bits of plaster broke off in the clumsy fingers and were conveyed to the little mouth. And so one feasted of the immense, cool wall, until Agnes came and patched up the hole.

Father was often away. When he returned, a white cloth was spread on the table, and we ate. Sister was also gone every forenoon. She was unattainably big and grown-up—she went to school already, while I still lay in my carefully guarded crib. In the morning, during breakfast, she would go to the window—she was allowed to do that!—and look down upon the street. Presently, she would cry: "There go the children already!" Then, hastily, she would snatch her black school-bag, which rattled mysteriously, and run away. And Mother would say: "She doesn't finish her milk. She is very nervous."

Then, again, the fogs of years shroud the isle of memory. When they at length dissolve, I am already a little boy, who can reach the door-knob and go alone into the kitchen, where Agnes dips her bare, red arms into the dishwater, out of which protrude sharp reefs of knives and forks and banks of bowls and plates. When the gray twilight falls, Agnes sings endless songs in a language I do not understand—songs so sad that sometimes I creep into the parlor, amid the plush furniture, and weep, without knowing why.

Then, once, I have a slight illness and lie all the day in Father's bed. And I ask: "How long am I going to live?" "I don't know," Sister answers. "Fifty years?" "Yes." "And twenty more?" "Yes." "And twenty more?" "Yes." "And ten more?" "Yes," she says, impatiently. "And then?" I feel the fear clutching at my throat, so that I can hardly speak. "Then," she cries, and jumps up, flushed with anger and impatience, "then, you will die!" And so I weep again, for hours, until Mother comes, and under her gentle words and touch I fall asleep.

The fogs keep drifting, now and again broken by little incidents. Summertime. The smell of hay. For lunch, we eat stewed pears. But the mosquitoes are ravenous. Once, I am in a row-boat. Again, I sleep on a train and overeat until I vomit. Then, Grandfather, with his long, white beard, leaning on his cane, brings nuts and a little glass of wine. And once I am allowed to cross the street alone and buy needles for Mother. A package of Number Twos. Mother sewed an entire year with these needles, and I would ask time and again if they were truly the right ones. Once, I became really ill, and doctors were called; and then I lay a long time in the hospital. At that time, I had a target to shoot at—a lion's head that opened its mouth. If you threw a ball into the mouth, it would snap shut. It exuded a breath of the wilderness and an odor of paste and varnish.

The suburban street in which our house stood was at that time but sparsely developed, especially to the left, toward the double row of young, dusty trees, near the river quay, where there was still an immense storage yard for lumber and hewn stone. The gate was locked, and placards were pasted on the board fence. One could climb over this fence, if one were as venturesome as Gutjahr. But I only peered longingly through the cracks into the forbidden land. This Gutjahr (I went to school with him) was short, sturdy, freckled, and wore a gray suit of mannish sackcloth. He was half a year older than I, and knew much of the world. Sometimes, in the evenings, he went with his mother to the saloon. She was the janitress of the front-house. Upon certain occasions, he was even allowed to go with her into Herr Abel's apartment, which was the only one overlooking the street. But once, when he stood in the vestibule with Ulrich Abel—pale Ulrich Abel—Ulrich's father, who happened to pass by, dragged his son after him, and the front door crashed shut behind them. Then Gutjahr's mother, a large, big-boned woman with black braids, came and silently led the bewildered boy into the rear-house, where they lived.

I likewise was not allowed to be friends with Ulrich Abel at that time, which was perhaps, as I thought, because my father did not like Herr Abel and was the only one in the house who did not greet him. (Our apartment was in a sort of side-house, connecting the front- and rear-houses on one side of the courtyard, and facing the side street.) And so little Ulrich Abel, who was a year younger than I and did not yet go to school, was alone for hours. From the window of our kitchen, I often saw him standing in the courtyard.

He had a hobby-horse with a silver-gray mane and red wheels, but he did not put it between his legs as he ought to have done; he just held it by the bridle and dragged it, dolefully, upside down, along the ground behind him. Once, I saw him standing at the half-open door of the basement, which was used as a warehouse. I went up to him. He was staring into the corner. But when he saw me, he slunk away. In the corner lay a dead mouse.

It was probably about this time that Mirjam moved into the house. Like myself, she would soon be seven years old, and she wore her hair in tight braids. Her father, whose name was Feuerbach, had rented the empty rooms above ours. Incidentally, the rumor was that he had been recommended as a tenant by old man Abel, who had taken elaborate pains to remove any possible difficulties to his accommodation. According to him, he had known the man and his wife for quite some time, and was their friend. The belongings of the Feuerbachs arrived in two carts. The first one carried a scant few pieces of household goods. The second one was heaped high with boxes, large and small, and Feuerbach himself—this was the first time I saw him—walked along beside it. When one of the boxes slid out of the hands of the truckman and fell to the ground, innumerable books were scattered over the flagging of the courtyard—many-colored books, with old-fashioned covers, large and small, thick and thin. Feuerbach stooped and silently placed them, one by one, back into the box, while the workmen were busy unloading the rest. Only later, when nearly everything had been moved into the house, did a one-horse carriage arrive, bringing, amid a mountain of baskets, bundles and hatboxes, a voluptuous young woman with auburn hair and very wide-open, pale-blue eyes. Beside her sat Mirjam. Her hair also was of a reddish blond, and her eyes resembled those of her mother. They passed me quickly, as I stood curiously in the hallway, and disappeared into the house.

After that encounter, I did not see them again for a long time, although I spent many a free hour after that first day walking up and down before their door and windows. The reason for this obscurity, as I afterwards discovered, was that Feuerbach had leased the little fruit garden adjacent to the rear house, which, being strictly secluded, was visible only from the back windows. There the new tenant spent his days with his wife and daughter, but I only learned of this, as I have said, some time later, and in a most singular and disturbing manner.

Because these new neighbors, on account of their—to me—mysterious invisibility, occupied my mind more and more, I spoke of them to my playmates and school-companions. It was thus I discovered that Gutjahr, the son of the janitress, was informed of everything in connection with Mirjam and her parents. I devoured his information with perplexed and trembling interest. He knew that, in his garden, Feuerbach cultivated fruit-trees, raised fruit on trellises, grafted, raked, tied, and sprinkled. He said that the wife, who was apparently ill, rested all day in a reclining chair, which, so that she might escape the wandering shadow of the house, was slowly moved from one end to the other of the zealously guarded enclosure. Of Mirjam herself, he told, strictly speaking, nothing at all. In response to my innumerable questions, he found vague, evasive answers that told me nothing. He even invented, just to torment me the more, monstrous tales, only to deny them the next moment.

I no longer remember how the transaction came about, but I gave him a racing-game, with only one dice missing. After he had carefully examined it, he took my hand without a word and led me across the courtyard into the rear-house, which I had never before entered. The stairs were filthy, and smelled of cabbage and mustiness. Upstairs, Gutjahr pushed open a door. I found myself in a small, wretched kitchen. Gutjahr's mother sat on a wooden box beside the stove, and slept. Her angular body had fallen backward and was partially leaning against the wall. Her head hung sideways. Grayish-black strings of hair fell over her face. Her mouth was open. She snored. An overturned, empty beer-glass lay on the table near her. With a gesture, Gutjahr cautioned me to be careful. We crept across the narrow kitchen into a small room. Gutjahr shut the door behind us. "She's been boozing again," he said. The ceiling of this little side-room sloped; in spots, where the gray plaster had fallen, the bare bricks showed. An arm-chair, a table, and a high bed breathed the stale, stuffy air. The bed was shoved in front of the window. Gutjahr jumped up on it, trampling with his dusty boots on the dirty gray covers and colored pillows, and invited me, with a motion of his hand, to follow him. Thus we stood, side by side, pressed against the window-pane, and looked down.

There lay Feuerbach's garden. The man himself was not to be seen. But in the extreme corner, far to the right, where the sun still shone—for it was already late afternoon—his wife rested in her steamer-chair. She seemed to be asleep. A white cloth lay over her eyes and forehead—a shield against the light or a compress, I do not know which. She was alone. Mildly disappointed, I was about to turn away; but Gutjahr, giggling, grasped me by the arm and pointed to a gooseberry bush. It was moving, as though some one were playfully pulling down its branches, just to see them snap back. Then, suddenly, something naked, something alive crawled out from under the leaves. It was Miriam. Crouching on the ground like a cat or some prowling animal, she thrust her brown, agile body, kittenish yet purposeful, cautiously through the grass. It seemed as if she were gliding toward a certain object—perhaps a butterfly—that I could not see. She shot forward abruptly, reached far out, and snatched something white from the ground. It was a stone. Disappointed, she tossed it aside and threw her brown nakedness backward into the grass. Gutjahr snickered.

At that moment, the door was jerked open and the janitress, with a coarse ejaculation of rage, yanked her son off the bed and, under a torrent of ugly words, started to beat him with a stick. He stumbled and fell; but even as I slid in shame and terror from the bed and slunk out of the door, I saw that Gutjahr had seized a footstool and was defending himself viciously. Shouts and the crash of overturned furniture followed me down the stairs and into the courtyard. I ran home in great confusion, said I was ill, and was put to bed. I fancy I must have been in bed with a temperature for about two weeks. The doctor came, examined me, and could not diagnose my ailment. He prescribed some harmless home remedies, especially rest and quiet. Thus, I could give free rein to my agitated thoughts and distorted dreams, in which the images of Mirjam, Gutjahr and the drunken woman were linked together in interminable, paralyzing repetition. It was some time before I recovered from that experience.

Yet, I remember this period of my life as a peaceful and happy one. My sickliness once more brought me close to my father and mother, whom I had neglected for school companions and new-found friends. I saw myself, nearly eight years of age, placed anew and exclusively in the secluded world of our home, and I learned to look at many things with different eyes. It was midsummer. School was closed. My sister, graduated from the elementary school, had been sent to Father's relatives in the country, ostensibly to study domestic science; and our servant Agnes also left us, shedding many tears. When I asked for the cause of such measures, I was given either a vague answer or none at all.

Once, awakening at night and hearing my good father walking restlessly up and down in the room with the plush furniture—light shone from under the door into the dining-room, where I slept—I slid from beneath the covers and listened. For a long time, I heard nothing but the monotonous *tramp! tramp!* of my father's footsteps and an occasional deep-drawn breath. Then, the bedroom door must have opened, for the voice of my mother became audible. "Come!" she said. "Go to sleep, Edward!"—and there was a deeper hopelessness in her tone than I could comprehend at that time. The light was extinguished; my poor father sighed, and all was silent.

Only much later I learned that he, who until now had been a bookkeeper in a large factory, had at this time lost his position, for some paltry reason. Meals became scanty. Father wrote many letters, went away every morning, dressed in his best suit, and returned at noon or in the evening, quiet, pale, and tired. We would sit together in silence, and I know that at that time my mother secretly took in sewing to help buy food. In spite of everything, she remained serene and seemed quite cheerful and, as I have said, I attached myself very closely to her during this period. She was tall, slender, industrious and gentle, but lacking in imagination; and the story of "the little tree that longed for different leaves"—which always brought tears to my eyes, I do not know why—she repeated at least a hundred times. Notwithstanding our poverty during that year, my grandmother moved in with us, for reasons unknown to me. She was my mother's mother, and she never wearied of entertaining me with fairy-tales and anecdotes of her life. Although uneducated, she was a woman of great experience and sympathetic understanding. She had lived an eventful and troubled life, with a capable husband who had been cursed by continuous adversity in business. She had borne a great number of children, raised them, and had seen them go out into the world. She had buried her husband As an old woman, she had gone to her son in America, and had returned, undejected, still full of life and laughter, and had now joined her own indigence with that of my parents. When she was in good spirits—and that was nearly always—she would mingle English gibberish with her talk, and this seemed to open up a world of adventurousness for me.

And thus, this quiet summer was filled with small events. When I was released from the confinement of my room and once more took possession in my own way of house, courtyard and street, school had commenced again. The boy Gutjahr I deliberately shunned, but as the authorities had just then begun to try out the coeducational system, I one day discovered Mirjam Feuerbach sitting in front of me, and my heart beat faster. Taking the same road morning and noon was bound to bring us closer together and, since I remained bashful, it was Mirjam who first spoke to me—quite unconcernedly, for I, after all, was merely a neighbor and casual acquaintance, and she could not know what a deep impression she had already made in my life. If I was somewhat silent, she was all the more talkative; and thus I learned that her father was "one who makes books," an author, or perhaps a scientist, and I also learned that she had lived for some years in the country, that her mother had been ailing now for months, and many other things. I never mentioned Gutjahr, whom she did not seem to know. On the other hand, her parents were evidently on friendly terms with Herr Abel of the front-house—and in this connection, I must mention here one little occurrence which I never forgot.

It was early winter—drab, gloomy days, ending in sudden darkness. That afternoon, Mirjam and I had left school together. We had stood for a moment in the half-darkness of the house entrance, when Ulrich Abel, who was always lurking in corners, stepped out of the shadows of the staircase and joined us. Mirjam greeted him in a friendly manner, but at the same time warily. He was delicate and pale, wore his brown hair long, and had dull brown eyes. We began to talk in hushed voices, oppressed by the gloominess of the place. Then, suddenly, I saw Herr Abel appear in the door on the opposite side of the archway. I started and, remembering the time when he had taken Ulrich away from Gutjahr in such a rough manner, I stepped back into the shadows. Meanwhile, Abel had come closer; but, to my great astonishment, there was nothing of anger or severity in his face. He stepped up to Mirjam, and it seemed to me as though his features were frozen in a false smile. He spoke to her; he laid his slender, yet heavy hand upon her head; he stroked her caressingly, with oppressive gentleness, on her cheek and chin, while she looked at him fixedly, in evident embarrassment. He talked continuously about many things, spoke casually, in rambling sentences and with great verbosity, about knowing some nice games, about inviting her into his house, about some possible gifts, and he smiled down at her with his artificial smile.

Something made me turn away from Mirjam and look at Ulrich. He also had retreated into the shadow of the staircase, and only the gleam of his terrified eyes was visible. Abel had now taken the girl by the arm and, chattering incessantly, was pulling her toward the stairs. Mirjam, who until now had stood shy and guileless before him, became terrified at this sudden insistence and tried to liberate herself from his grasp. Red blotches appeared on his face. He stopped chattering, but he did not release her. Instead, he pulled her over the lower steps toward the door of his apartment. She uttered a little cry, in startled confusion. At this moment, the entrance to the archway darkened, and Mirjam's mother appeared in the gateway from the courtyard. I had not seen her since the day I spied upon her from Gutjahr's room. Her face seemed to have broadened; she wore a wide cloak, and moved heavily. When the man saw her, he released the child's arm, bowed politely, and took off his hat. Frau Feuerbach remained silent, and though Abel began to talk and laugh about this thing and that, she neither answered nor moved. Presently, she nodded. "Come, Mirjam!" she said, in a low voice, and left, accompanied by the bewildered girl. Abel's chatter ceased abruptly. He turned, looked about him, his features now slack and spongy, and stormed up the stairs. Only Ulrich remained behind, pressed into the shadows of the staircase; his eyes were glistening. I stole away into the street.

Of this Abel—his first name was Johannes—there is still much to tell. He was about forty years old, a powerfully built man with a broad forehead, and at that time he wore a brown, well-cared-for beard. One might have called his face handsome, had not certain little creases and frowns marked on it the capability of sudden passions and capricious moods. His temper was not without a trace of timidity, his severity not without gentleness—this gentleness, however again, not without inflexibility. His eyes, red-veined and slightly protruding, were apt to wander, and held hidden lights and shadows. He had, as I afterwards learned, married a very young girl, a niece of his first wife, and the rumor was that nothing but the extraordinary resemblance of this girl to the deceased woman had prompted him to the marriage. But this union—not a happy one, by the way—likewise proved of short duration. Abel's second wife died at Ulrich's birth. The man remained alone with the child in the large, well-furnished, but gloomy apartment that was only visited—with the exception of the gruff old cook—by the janitress of the rear-house. Cook and janitress, as I heard, had been with Abel for many years; and Ulrich, although his father sometimes exhibited a sudden interest in his upbringing, was mostly dependent on these two women for companionship and knowledge. For Abel himself, his mode of living and his character, this period of inner emptiness after the death of Ulrich's mother may well have been —in the readjustment and reorientation—a decisive and dangerous factor.

These unfortunate domestic matters were counterbalanced, as far as this may have been possible, by the extraordinary success of Abel's business ventures, beginning shortly after the death of his first wife. By inheritance, he had come into possession of a small marmalade factory, old-fashioned and of bad repute. Abel took over the property at a time when an exceptionally late crop of preservable autumn fruit had destroyed all possibilities of profitable commercial canning. Without ceremony, he decided to discontinue the manufacture of marmalade. As he was able to use his mixers and vats, there was very little other equipment needed to turn the place into a chocolate factory. A device for breaking and roasting the cocoa-beans and a granite rolling-mill for pulling and grinding the semi-pulpy paste were easily secured. The enterprise flourished. Abel added an extra workroom for the manufacture of plain chocolate-creams and light pastries, and out of the first profits bought rotating copper kettles for the purpose of producing cheap sweets, in the English fashion. Within a year, he had brought to life, in a small way, a factory of totally different character, which, as he was then without serious competition, made it possible for him to put aside substantial sums of money in a very short time. He bought houses and lots in this suburb, again profited by their opportune sale, and slowly accumulated a fortune sufficient to enable him to indulge even his most expensive whims. Realizing this, and having, through the misfortunes of his earlier life, become a stranger to any serious impulses, he now proceeded to interrupt his industrious life with intervals and digressions of carefully planned dissipation. He played the instrument of Life cold-bloodedly, and ruthlessly manipulated its strings.

IT WAS shortly after the episode between Abel and Mirjam, on a Saturday. I remember this quite distinctly, because my parents had left early that morning on one of their visits to my sister—a fussy procedure, which was repeated regularly every fortnight. I had remained at home with Grandmother. She busied herself in her room and, when she came out, I saw to my astonishment—since this happened only at rare intervals—that she was dressed to go out. With a somewhat forced cheerfulness, entirely lacking her usual bantering coarseness of expression, she told me that she was going to the doctor, "to have him examine her thoroughly." She imparted this information with a laugh that startled me, but apparently she was not willing to say more about it. With a friendly tap on my shoulder, she suggested that I spend two hours as best I could, and pushed me out of the door. In the courtyard, I met Mirjam. We went up to her room and worked out our arithmetic examples together; then we played, and I so completely lost track of the time that the two hours must have stretched into three and a half before I went downstairs again.

It was early evening. I was abstracted and somewhat tired, so it meant nothing to me that the door to the apartment opened as I turned the knob. I walked into the anteroom, into the dark dining-room, and put on the light.

On the sofa, stiffly erect, sat my poor grandmother. She started as the light flamed up, but she remained seated and only nodded at me with a difficult smile. She still wore her gay, close-fitting, somewhat ostentatious street dress, but the tight jacket was slightly open at the throat, and I noticed that her small hat was ridiculously askew on top of her gray hair. From beneath it, out of a face of alarming pallor, stared two distended, deeply troubled eyes. She had probably been sitting like this for a long time in the slowly gathering darkness. She smiled at me and called me to her with a feeble motion of her hand. "You mustn't say anything," she whispered. "You mustn't say where I—" She stopped abruptly, rose, kissed me on the hair, and went slowly, with unsteady, yet controlled, steps, out of the room.

Curiously enough, this occurrence revived an old weakness of mine which had not troubled me for several years: I was afraid. It was not an immediate return of the terror that formerly had used to clutch me, and that was afterwards to clutch me so penetratingly, tenaciously and decisively, but a fear of faces, of grimaces, of anything distorted. Perhaps because of the expression in Grandmother's face that evening—naturally, I had kept silent, as she asked—perhaps also because of a famous picture-book which I happened to possess at this time and which portrayed in a terrifying manner the punishment of childish disobediences, my nightly dreams, and soon my day-dreams as well, were haunted by weird personages. But these specters never lost their relation to reality. Now, it was Mirjam whose hair changed to worms; now, Grandmother, who stared at me with the red, blind eyes of a hen; then, it was the milkman whom I saw suddenly coming up the long, spiral staircase, a grinning skull in the place of his head and rapping at the door—eight times, so softly that only I, sleeping on the couch in the dining-room, could hear him. I said not a word about these apparitions that tortured me, but I tried by a hundred pretexts to keep the door to the parlor and the one to my parents' bedroom open at night. Because I failed in this and because my good father chided me severely for my cowardice, I fell into a fever and was allowed to sleep for three or four blissful nights between Mother and Father in their double bed, safe and in glorious security. Then, I was put back again into the dining-room with the creaking furniture. Thereupon, I determined secretly to take the officer's saber—a memento of my uncle, who had disappeared—out of the clothes closet in the anteroom and to bed with me. For many years I lay, night after night, pressed against this ornamental, nickel-plated weapon, torn between fear and a hazy fantasy of heroic defense.

Only one human being—Mirjam—shared this secret with me, and that came about by accident. One night in early spring, some one knocked at our door. I awoke out of my sleep with a start. My father got out of bed and opened the door. I heard Feuerbach's voice, and then the voices trailed off into the parlor. I could hear them talking about doctors, and the word "cab-stand" came clearly to my ears; my father hurried back into the bedroom, no doubt to dress, and I could hear how Feuerbach meanwhile drummed with his knuckles against the windows and muttered to himself, in great excitement. After a while, Father returned to Feuerbach. "Calm yourself!" he said. Evidently, my mother must also have gotten up. She said: "God will help!" I heard some one sobbing. Then, all three disappeared in great haste. Their steps died away on the stairs. Hardly fifteen minutes could have passed before the outer door was again opened and my mother entered, followed by Mirjam, who was crying softly and seemed greatly confused. She was wrapped in a huge, knitted shawl, and beneath it showed the long nightgown which covered her throat and naked limbs. The untied laces of her shoes flopped round her bare feet. She trembled. Mother told her to sit down at the head of my long couch, fetched a pillow and a cover out of her room for the freezing girl, stroked her tear-wet cheeks, spoke a few soothing words, and hurried out again, leaving me alone with Mirjam.

It was dark. In the wavering light of a street lamp, the cross-bars of my window traced a weird, slanting, distorted pattern on the ceiling. The wind, groaning, groped around the house, and the melting snow, dripping from the eaves, splashed and tapped monotonously in heavy drops on the tin sill of the window. As Mirjam was still shivering, I sat up and attempted to cover her with my feather-quilt. But it was too short. Suddenly, she kicked off her shoes and slid in beside me. We lay there, and were silent. Only our breathing was audible. My blood pounded, and I could not understand why it was that suddenly I also began to tremble, although the good warmth of the cover and of the body close by my side penetrated me. Mirjam now lay quiet. Her tears had stopped flowing. Was she asleep? "Mirjam!" I said, very softly. She was awake. She whispered: "My mother is very sick!" "Is she going to die?" "They don't know yet. My father is getting the doctor." I hesitated. "Do you believe that we never come back to life again, if we die?" "Nobody knows that," she whispered. "I asked my father." "Shall we ask teacher?" I said. "He doesn't know, either. No one knows." We were silent. Suddenly, Mirjam giggled. "Now," she said, "it's just as if we were married to each other!" She stretched herself under the cover, and when her warm body touched mine, a great shyness came over me. I moved aside to the farthest edge of the couch, and stammered: "Shall we get up?"

She lay there, stretching, and I thought I noticed that her breathing had also quickened. But suddenly she started, reached into the aperture between the cushion and the back of the couch, and very carefully drew forth my unsheathed saber. "What is that?" she asked, puzzled and curious. "That is a sword." "What is it for?" "Sometimes, there are enemies," I said mysteriously; "then, one needs a sword!" She moved close to me again. "Enemies?" she asked, in an uncertain voice. "Here, in this house? In your apartment?" I squeezed myself still further away from her and said, in great distress: "Shall we get up?" She slid from under the quilt and promptly answered: "We'll put on something and go upstairs. Come, quickly! But be careful!"

It was an audacious expedition, but not without merriment. We moved about with exaggerated caution and spoke in whispers. We tiptoed across the floor, past Grandmother's door, from behind which came the sound of heavy, rhythmic breathing, and groped our way up the dark stairs. On the floor above, light shone through the crack of the partly open hall-door. Mirjam—she had slipped into my coat—opened it entirely. We stood in an empty, lighted vestibule. Against the bright glass-door to the left was outlined the enlarged silhouette of my father. He did not move. With extreme caution, Mirjam peered through the keyhole. She returned and placed her lips against my ear. "He is alone in the room, sitting in the armchair, sleeping." She drew me into a small, dark room farther to the right—one which I had never been allowed to enter. I only knew that Mirjam's father used to be in this room in the evenings, and also often during the day. Groping about, I found an upholstered armchair. Mirjam squeezed herself into the wide seat beside me. We remained in darkness. "It smells queerly in here," I whispered, "of dust and old wood." "It is the books. Father has hundreds of thousands of books. They cover the walls." I was dumbfounded. From the next room, the bedroom, came the muffled tones of my mother's voice and that of a strange man. "Careful!" he admonished. Then, once more there was silence.

Now, a sound arose in the next room—a low moan at first, then swelling in volume, high, higher, shrill, animal-like, wild, jagged, torn. And silence. Then, stifled sobs—Feuerbach's voice. The stranger: "You had better leave the room. You are losing your nerve." Silence. Mirjam trembled. "Do you know," she whispered, "that one turns green, when one is dead?"

The door opened. It was Feuerbach. He reeled to the table close to our armchair, not seeing us. In the flickering light of a suddenly flaming match, he fumbled for the gas-jet; and his unguarded features appeared before us so lashed and torn with suffering that a cry of terror was wrung from Mirjam's lips. Already the light was burning, and Feuerbach had his features under control. He stood before us—I could never look at his face after that without recalling this moment. Out of the creased lines of his severe and intellectual lean face, he smiled down at us. The usually so serene countenance of the man, now obviously struggling for composure, twitched with uncontrollable terror beneath a forced cheerfulness. He began to speak. "You are here," he said, "and I thought I had taken Mirjam downstairs! Why are you sitting in the dark? It is cold in here, too! . . . Those are my books. Many of them have pictures. As soon as I have time, I will—" As he talked, his eyes groped along the walls, as if in search of support, and it seemed to me that he was not really aware of his own words. Talking, stammering, chattering, he listened—all his senses were inclined toward the next room, where again the long-drawn, animal sound had started and swelled horribly. If at first Feuerbach had endeavored to drown out that demoniacal cry by raising his voice, he now relinquished all attempt at self-control. He seemed about to rush to the door, but his knees gave way beneath him and he fell into a chair. We sat there, dry-eyed, silent, motionless. Hasty steps could be heard in the next room and, now and then, muffled voices, the splashing of water, chairs being moved about; and as the terrible cry diminished into a soft moan, we suddenly became aware of a new voice in there besides the others—a weak, wailing voice. I looked at Feuerbach. Pale of face, his head stretched forward, he listened. Then, he rose; a smile strayed over his lips, and he tiptoed into the next room.

We two remained in the armchair in great perplexity, and when they commenced to talk louder and more casually in there, we, likewise, lost our restraint, became sleepy, and began to feel the cold. Then Mother came in, hot and tired. She quietly took me by the hand and led me back down the dark stairs to my room. I could not keep my eyes open and, half asleep, I heard my mother say: "Mirjam has a little brother, now!"

SPRING and summer came. Many little happenings passed by me, sad and pleasant, but none of them sufficed to remove Mirjam's brother—Ruben, they called him—from the range of my interest. Yes, there was something about the child that attracted not only me, but all the other tenants of the house; but this could not be attributed so much to the pronounced delicacy of this prematurely born child—for many weeks, a famous specialist came daily from the city to attend him—as, far more, to the singular, poignantly sweet beauty of this frail creature: a beauty hardly conceivable in a human being of such tender age. He had a small, transparent face, and he lay there without a sound, gazing out of serious, grown-up eyes. Visitors came, friends and neighbors, and among them Abel, soberly dressed, with an offering of flowers. Mirjam's mother—Feuerbach and the little girl were out—received him, standing in the center of the room; I sat, unnoticed, on a footstool near the stove. It seemed to me that Abel offered his congratulations in an exceedingly cordial voice, but the woman remained silent, took his flowers awkwardly, and became very pale. When he attempted to go to the cradle, she stepped, without a word, into his path, and did not move even when he came up close to her. Smiling, he tried to look into her eyes, but, without moving from the spot, she bent her head far backward and in her face, now fully exposed to the lamplight, there was an indescribable expression of pain, shame and loathing. Abel's smile vanished; an expression of resentment and enigmatical triumph came over his face and, abruptly, he turned on his heel and left the room without a farewell.

When the door had closed behind him, a great weariness seemed to overcome the woman. She reeled, sat down near the sleeping child, and buried her face in her hands. The crown of her auburn hair loosened, closing about her like a tangled, close-meshed net of passion and sin, and her shoulders shook convulsively with suppressed sobs. She had forgotten my presence, and I was afraid to remind her of it; and so I must have sat in my corner, without moving, for about an hour, until Feuerbach and Mirjam returned. Quickly drying her tears and feigning complete weariness, Frau Feuerbach hastily withdrew. Feuerbach sighed, and Mirjam also seemed sad.

Even then, I felt that the girl was drawing away from me. Not that I had given her any reason for this, but conditions in her family brought her domestic duties in plenty. She helped in the kitchen, minded the little boy, worked in the fruit-garden, and, although not yet nine years old, she undertook these obligations with pride and pleasure. Once, when I waited for her in the hallway and, shyly but with clumsy familiarity, spoke of the things we shared in common and asked her to visit me, she, with childish insolence, paid no attention to me. From that time on, we measured each other with silent hostility, not even greeting one another when we chanced to meet.

This estrangement led me to seek other companions. I watched Ulrich Abel, who now also went to school, and I found him singularly changed. His shyness and sensitiveness had not hindered him from making friends with Gutjahr, and so he found himself entangled in many an evil prank. Delicate as he was, he fought, pale of face but with vicious determination, with older and far stronger pupils of a neighboring school, and even though he succeeded in intimidating a few good-natured or indolent boys, these scrimmages always proved disastrous to him in the end. Then, when evening fell, Gutjahr would bring him home with bleeding scratches and painstakingly readjusted attire. Whether by virtue of the wily counsels of the experienced Gutjahr, or whether because of the other interests and diversions of the man, in any case, it was a long time before Abel had the slightest suspicion of any change in the behavior of his son. Once, I saw Gutjahr and Ulrich standing together in a corner behind the basement door. When I sauntered up to them, the older boy immediately broke off in the middle of his sentence and started to whistle, with feigned carelessness. But young Abel, not sufficiently quick-witted to understand such signals and not seeing me, asked: "In the summer-house?" His voice was timorously eager. When Gutjahr did not answer, Ulrich turned and saw me. "He was listening," said Gutjahr. The little boy flushed violently. "That's a dirty trick!" he exclaimed. He lowered his head and started after me. Gutjahr held him back. He remarked: "Oh, he's been up to see me, too. But he has a swelled head, now. He goes with Mirjam!" They both laughed, and I stepped back in embarrassment. "Make him swear!" said Ulrich Abel. "Make him swear he won't tell!" Gutjahr grinned. "We'll take him with us. That's much better!"

They held a whispered consultation, and the outcome of it was that, with great formality, I became one of them.

What this meant I did not realize for some time, for the pursuits of this new union were at present restricted to playing at the forbidden river-front with Gutjahr and Ulrich and to slinking along the quiet side-streets, slamming gates, violently ringing door-bells, tearing down or befouling signs—all manner of impulsive and aimless mischief, invariably followed by wild flight around corners and into the mysterious recesses of dark hallways. What bound me to the others was not so much that I found pleasure in such pranks, but rather Gutjahr's ingenuity in evading my questions—a dexterity he had shown before, upon a different subject—concerning the summer-house and what was to be seen there. At about this time, I again became ill with a fever, and Gutjahr, Ulrich and the summer-house were the objects of my horribly distorted dreams.

My good parents did not observe much of all this, probably because it had become more and more difficult to provide the daily bread. It was an evil time. Useless tariff wars ruined business and closed factories; unemployment increased, and soon even the most capable, once he had lost his position, could hardly contrive to earn a living. All this was the subject of daily discussion during mealtime—an endless and depressing debate, to which I soon ceased to listen. But once I became aware of a peculiar pause during one of these conversations. While my father was in the course of making one of his despairing reports, my mother suddenly remarked: "I could find some one in this house who has money—one who is not unwilling to part with it, at times." She said this casually and with an artificial smile; then, she was silent. To my father's face came an expression of broken pride and angry sadness. There was a moment of stormy silence.

When I told Gutjahr about this, he chuckled for a long time. But he would not discuss it. "You'll find out!" he said.

He knew everything and could do everything. At that time —it was summer—he wore a very heavy winter jacket, doubtless given to his mother by one of the tenants, and he boasted proudly and volubly of the extra warmth it afforded. In school, he whistled, bleated, stank, and learned nothing. Yet, he must have had some innate ability, because, before the term ended, he always managed, by a sudden frenzy of study and shammed repentance, to achieve his promotion. A mysterious friendship existed between him and a turner's apprentice, five years older than he—a stupid lout, whom I knew only by the curious name of "Daffy Anton." There was open hostility between Gutjahr and the old fruit vendor across the street—an involved and desperate affair, in which an alleged theft of money, a summons by the police, and two vengefully overturned baskets of oranges had prominent part. In connection with this, there was gossip about a rowdy hair-pulling match between the woman who kept the fruit-stand and Gutjahr's mother.

It was not until a few months later, and then only by chance, that I gained a comprehensive knowledge of Gutjahr's talents. One day, it became known that Herr Abel, for a mere pittance, had bought the house—the front, rear, and side buildings—from the widow of the former owner. Moreover, they said this had come about through a mysterious manipulation of notes, blank notes, signed by the deceased and given to Abel in payment of his share in some dark real-estate transaction. These Abel had filled out, shortly after the death of his partner, for exorbitant amounts, ostensibly to cover mythical losses; and then, he had discounted them. Be that as it may, the fact was that Abel, now owner of the house, transformed the large, empty rooms of the rear house into a fancy bakery, adding a cheap pastry department to his near-by chocolate factory. This brought with it rubbish, stench, noise, delivery wagons, and strange folk into the house—laborers, but mostly factory girls, pale, care-worn creatures, adorned in cheap finery; girls, such as are employed in such establishments for sorting, weighing, packing and shipping. Standing in the courtyard, one could see these girls through the deep, tunnel-like windows, half underground, standing behind their tables. They chatted and laughed as they worked, and their glances often strayed up toward the open.

I met Gutjahr one day before these windows. He was crouching on the ground, a long willow twig across his knees, ogling down at the busily working girls and motioning to them with meaningless, grotesque gestures. They noticed him and laughed. Then, he commenced to point anxiously to his stomach and his mouth, then pathetically to the cakes on the table; and he acted the part of a half-starved boy to such perfection that finally one of the girls, between laughter and loathing, opened the window for a moment and threw him a small, round cake of dough and cocoanut. He caught the gift, and at the same time placed his stick between the two open window-frames in such a way that they remained slightly ajar after the girl had carelessly closed and hooked them. Then, he cautiously retrieved the twig, bowed once more, and turned away. The ingratiating smile on his face abruptly changed to a sneer. "Damned fools, down there!" he said. "Now, the window is open!"

I did not understand his purpose. But next day, he pulled a lot of cakes out of his winter jacket and magnanimously gave me some.

Such a bold, breath-taking method of making the things of this world one's own did not fail to leave me impressed. So, one afternoon, I crossed the courtyard, entered the hallway of the forbidden rear house, opened one of the narrow, frosted windows overlooking Feuerbach's fruit-garden, stepped onto the sill, and jumped—it must have been about six feet—into a vegetable bed. I did all this without deliberation, without any set purpose, with the same abnormal determination shown at times by Ulrich Abel. I trudged through the soft earth straight for a plum tree, laden with early ripened fruit; and with trembling, grasping fingers, I began to fill my pockets.

Only then did I look wild-eyed about me and, to my horror, saw Feuerbach sitting in the open arbor, built far to the left, against the house wall. He was sitting, facing away from me, in a garden chair. He did not move. His presence had a paralyzing and sobering effect on me; I slunk back, my heart in my throat, over the vegetable bed to the window, constantly watching out of the corner of my eye to see if Feuerbach had observed me. He remained motionless, gazing in apparent trouble of thought through the tree-tops. But when I had already reached the window and was drawing myself up by a projection in the wall, he—without moving—called me to him. Trembling, yet defiant, I walked to the arbor and waited before him. He was silent; he did not even look at me. Presently, he said, softly: "Fetch that basket standing over there." I did so. "Fill it with fruit and take it to your mother, with my compliments." He rose, nodded, and, without so much as glancing at me, departed, slightly bent forward and with uncertain steps, through the garden gate. For a long time, I stood rooted to the spot. Upstairs, looking through the window, his face grotesquely distorted by the cheap window-pane, Gutjahr lay and grinned.

I took the plums out of my pocket and placed them in the basket, which I left standing in the middle of the arbor. Slowly and laboriously, I climbed through the window, into the hallway, and went home. I must have had a guilty look, for when I entered the room, Grandmother gazed searchingly into my eyes. At first, she was silent; then she said, with a certain seriousness: "You came to see me? Have you something to tell me?" "No," I said, with difficulty. But I went up to her, and she took her poor, tired feet off the footstool that had once been my chair, and bade me sit down. I did so; I was now really much too big a boy for it. At length, she broke the silence. "No one will trouble you here," she said. Then, I flung myself on the couch and sobbed.

Grandmother turned on the light, for the days were already growing short, and sat down at the table. "Will you write something for me?" she asked. I raised myself out of my misery and looked at her. There, in the light, she sat, white-haired, pallid and thin. The gaslight sang. We were alone in the apartment. Silently, I rose, fetched paper, ink, and pen out of my little desk, and prepared myself to write. I waited. She lay her hand on my head, and repeated: "Will you write something for me?" I nodded, and she continued, in a very low voice: "It has come over me that I want to see it preserved. When an old person passes away, that is not sad. But in one corner of the soul, there still remains the child, who is despondent, and weeps, and wants to live . . ." I understood nothing of what she was talking about, and indeed I hardly listened, for my thoughts were in the fruit-garden and with the plums in the basket. She bade me write what she dictated, and she spoke of a little child, born somewhere in the long ago, who grew up among people whose name I had never heard, but who were nevertheless my grandmother's parents, before they—at some forgotten time—had grown too tired for this world. She spoke very softly and with great tenderness of this and that little event—memories that flickered like the trembling flame of a death-candle through the darkness of the years.

I was silent, for with all this, it had become late and I was weary. I was silent, and had given up trying to write down what Grandmother said. My thoughts wandered into countless by-ways while I gazed into the calm eyes of the speaker, and my hand sketched huge, sprawling letters and, at last, only the same horribly simplified grimace. My grandmother noticed nothing of all this. Her eyes shone, and there was a delicate flush on her cheeks. She kept on talking, and often smiled to herself. What was she talking about? I thought of Gutjahr, and the summer-house, and the plums in the basket.

Suddenly, the tone of her voice changed. She said: "Aren't you tired yet of writing all this?" She bent toward me and looked over my shoulder. She said nothing. When I looked up at her again, she sat speechless, old and lonely, with the lamplight shining on her white hair.

A pebble ticked against the window—then, a second—then, a third. Grandmother said: "Some one is calling you, my child!" Quietly, I left the room.

Gutjahr stood downstairs. "To-night," he said, "there is a full moon. Do you want to come along to the summer-house?" My heart pounded. At the stroke of eleven, he would be at the gate. I went to bed early and lay awake, greatly excited. In the next room, it had grown still; and when I raised my head and listened carefully, I could hear the heavy, rhythmic breathing of Mother and Father through the door. When the clock struck half-past-ten, I rose noiselessly and, trembling, slipped into my clothes. With cautious steps I tiptoed past Grandmother's room, glided through the vestibule, and squeezed through the door. I stood on the landing of the staircase. My hands groped down along the railing—five, six, seven, eight steps I counted. Already I could see the faintly lighted window in the hallway on the ground floor.

Then, into the midst of the echoing silence of the cool, spiral staircase, there fell a light, high, long-drawn, mournful sound. It was Grandmother's voice. She was awake, and she sang. Not really as people sing. A humming, rather;

a child-like, cheerful wailing, a piping chant, that to me was depressing and sad, unreal and far-away: not seeming to come from the room of the old woman, but out of the past, like the pale notes of an ancient spinet. I turned, rushed down the stairs, and, without looking back, vaulted through the ground window onto the street.

The stone flagging lay naked in the solitude of night. Moonlight trickled from the house-tops. I pressed myself into the shadow of the closed doorway and waited. The houses across the street looked sleepy and unfamiliar. Among the wires, a delicate melody tinkled, sung by the wind and dying out in the light autumn night. My heart beating fast, I drew the adventure of this cold star-air into my lungs, and trembled. From somewhere, Ulrich had glided alongside of me. We stood there, silent. "It was easy!" he whispered. "He was not at home. At night, he's always on the go." I stammered: "Whom?" "The old man!" He said it almost viciously, clipping the words.

Gutjahr came round the corner. "Where are you coming from?" "Wasn't home yet." He grinned. "Come on!" We walked one behind the other—Gutjahr, Ulrich, then I. The way led over a board fence—a dog growled, but he seemed to know Gutjahr, and did not bark. On we went through a window, a narrow corridor, and out through another window: we were in the courtyard of our own house. Blind window-panes all around us, glistening in the moonlight. Only out of Grandmother's room came a fitful light. Crushing silence. Water dripped from a leak into the courtyard. From the gutter on the roof came the yowl of a cat. We stepped into the shadow of the rear house and climbed through one of the tunnel-like openings, down into the bakeshop. There was a strong odor of cold steam and sticky sweets. We groped our way to the rear of the place, between long tables. Gutjahr pointed to a high, blackish pile near the oven. "Help yourselves!" It was chocolate-covered cake. He himself did not touch it. We slunk on, always one behind the other. Something rustled in a corner; my heart stood still. "Rats!" said Gutjahr, and hummed. Up creaking stairs, and we were outside, beside the wall that separated Feuerbach's garden from a building lot, strewn with rubbish, bricks and lumber. In the rear, facing the other side-street, a flimsy house of boards and glass was built on this abject ground, forming a jutting corner—a garden pavilion, intended for a café, but now unoccupied for years. Like the lot and garden, this ambiguous building belonged to our house. Gutjahr motioned us to silence and, in the shadow of the wall, we crept toward the summer-house. We reached it. Pressed against the high, plastered base of the flimsy building, we listened.

Silence. Somewhere in the distance, on the far side of the fence, some drunken revelers shouted. Even these noises drifted away. Suddenly we heard near by, behind the thin frame of the house, a whispering voice: "I heard steps outside! Those were footsteps!" Another voice whispered: "It was nothing, nothing!" I stood as if paralyzed. Ulrich's hand pressed my arm until it hurt. Inside, a piece of furniture creaked. "Come!" some one whispered. A voice fluttered: "What do you want? What do you want of me?" It seemed as though a hand covered those whispering lips. Furniture creaked. Something tore itself away and whispered, whimpering: "No! No! No!" Then, gasping: "Those were footsteps outside! Let me go!" Every syllable of the broad, suburban idiom vibrated with growing terror. A deep, guttural sound was the answer; an undefinable, growling noise. Then, tramping and panting, as though two people were wrestling. Something creaked beneath a falling weight. A voice, the same, whispering voice, but changed—a flickering little flame now, thrust back into the last corner of its bewilderment, thin and forsaken, a pathetic cry—

whimpered: "What are you doing to me!" And it lost itself in a sigh.

Gutjahr and Ulrich softly clambered up on the stone base, pulled themselves up to a small crack between the boards, and pressed their faces against it. With exaggerated, excited gestures of disgusting enjoyment, Gutjahr motioned me to join them. I crouched below, frozen with horror. The crying began again, and a deeper voice indistinctly babbled reassurances. Then, as it seemed, some one within the summer-house rose, and a match flared up.

At the moment the unsteady light appeared, Ulrich reeled back from his elevated vantage-point, and when he stepped out of the shadow of the house into the bright moonlight, I saw his face. His distracted, wandering eyes fastened themselves upon Gutjahr, whose mirth, now that apparently he could see what was transpiring inside, grew into a veritable frenzy of motioning, pointing, and beckoning of arms. Ulrich panted: "Back! Don't look! No!" Then he sprang forward and dragged Gutjahr away from the crack. Both stumbled, fell, and lay panting, clasped in each other's arms. Inside, the match went out; a startled cry was abruptly stifled. There was a leaden silence, without and within, broken only by the crunching of the sand and the heavy breathing of the wrestlers. I saw Ulrich choking Gutjahr, who was pressing his knee into Ulrich's belly. Then, Ulrich succeeded in freeing one arm. He groped about and pulled a piece of rusty iron out of the rubbish heap nearby—a discarded tool, perhaps the blade of an old saw. There was an insane look in his eyes as he raised it to strike. At the last moment, Gutjahr tore himself from his clutch, sprang up, and took two, three, four jumps—out into the moonlight. There he crouched, a huge, panting cat. His arm, dangling below his knee, snatched up a broken brick. Ulrich, erect, lifted his hand to protect his face. Then, suddenly changing his mind, the crouching Gutjahr hurled the heavy stone through the window of the summer-house. Glass splintered at our feet, as Gutjahr sprang into the shadow of the fence and, a moment later, vaulted across it into the street. The patter of his running feet died away in the night.

Then, close above us, illumined by the moon, the pale face of a man appeared through the jagged glass. It was Johannes Abel.

I ran, without once looking back. I do not remember how I found my way back home. Next day, Ulrich did not come to school. Nor in the days following. About a week later, we learned that Abel had placed him in a private school in the lowlands. I did not see him again for eight years. But of that, later.

HERE I must tell of an inexplicable delusion which I suffered after these events, and which I cannot recollect without deep shame. The nocturnal adventure at the summer-house had all the more inflamed my imagination, since—always the weak and immoderate victim of my impressions—I now found myself involved in a world of passions, the nature and substance of which, although I had a very vague idea of its mechanics and significance, I did not really understand. To turn to my parents for an answer to these questions seemed to me impossible; and Gutjahr, who could have enlightened me easily enough, talked at great length of man's begetting power, but apparently did not suspect that I could be so ignorant as not to understand him. On my part, out of chastity, or perhaps more because I feared his sarcasm, I carefully refrained from acquainting him with my innocence. Thus it occurred that his probably sufficiently plain coarseness created heated, fantastic visions in my brain, which were the more lurid the less I understood of what he was talking about. I now perceived every person and nearly everything about me solely in relation to this mysterious enigma of which I was possessed. And so it happened, without any foundation whatsoever, that suddenly, over night, the conviction ate into my soul that my good mother, in some vile and shameful manner, was secretly connected with Johannes Abel. To-day, looking back and smiling at such puerile suspicions, I find it difficult to comprehend how I could have suffered with such indescribable bitterness at that time from so absurd a delusion. If she left the house alone, I would slink after her as far as the corner of the street. When she came home, my eyes would fasten themselves searchingly upon her face. For my father, who saw nothing and suspected nothing, I felt a burning pity. Hundreds of times, I planned to open his eyes to the criminal disgrace in which he lived. One day, when my mother, in plain view of every one, accosted Abel in the courtyard—she was begging him to be patient a little longer for the rent—every drop of blood seemed to drain from my heart, and I was inconsolable in my misery. That day, I went to bed before my usual time. Mother came to me, in excellent spirits, softly humming, and asked what ailed me. I did not answer her. She left me, painfully bewildered. I despised her, in my intense love. Half the nights, I would lie awake and weep.

And so my solitary refuge was lost to me, and the entire order of my world collapsed. The first result was that I began to hate school, and played truant. Several times, I covered my default by asking Grandmother to write letters of excuse; I simply said to her that I did not wish to bother Father. She looked at me steadily, but did as I asked without further question. After that, I learned to imitate her plain, laborious handwriting.

The leisure I gained in this manner—to stay at home was naturally out of the question, because of my parents—I spent in out-of-the-way streets or at the quay of the river, a gray, sluggish, evil-smelling stream, full of rubbish and garbage emptying out of side canals. There, carefully stacked, were great numbers of granite blocks, such as were used at that time in paving streets. There, day after day, I loafed about with Gutjahr. Gutjahr's friend, that Anton whom I have mentioned above, would come, squat down beside us in his overalls, ostentatiously smoke a cigar-butt, and, without taking any heed of me, would talk with Gutjahr about this or that girl, known to both of them, in a manner disturbingly crass and to the point. Others would join us, half-grown louts, mostly apprentices, but also many who, although no longer going to school, were without any occupation—ragged vagabonds, shunning the day and suspicious of me on account of my decent clothes.

Once, they were teaching me a dirty game—"star-gazing," they called it—and I, as the youngest, was made the goat. They bound my eyes, and suddenly I became aware that my partner, taking advantage of my helplessness, was relieving Nature against me. Just then, Mirjam came walking along the river shore. She wore a new, stiffly starched, red dress—I can still see it to-day—and by the hand she held little Ruben, who tripped along unconcernedly on his short, wobbly legs. For a moment, it seemed that she would circle our group; but then her bright little face took on an expression of arrogance and pride, and she marched straight through our midst. I greeted her, not without embarrassment; but she looked directly at me and did not answer. Only after she had passed us did we feel at ease again. Gutjahr explained to the others, with much nasty, suggestive snickering, that she "went with me," and thus suddenly I found myself with a certain reputation which did not all displease me. Yes, it was so much to my liking to be a somebody among these louts that I determined to renew my friendship with Mirjam at the earliest opportunity. Meanwhile, I endeavored to excel by a display of wealth and by absurd behavior. I lied in a senseless manner about my poor father being the manager of a factory, and to confirm my statements, I filched many small articles from my home, and presented them to this or that member of the gang. Thus, despite my youth, I succeeded, at the expense of my poor parents, in attaining a unique position and a certain leadership among this band of ruffians.

In addition to this, it actually came about that Mirjam and I again became friends. One day, Frau Feuerbach invited us (my parents, my grandmother, and myself) to a small party at her home—the occasion for which we did not at first know, but I remember that they talked about it at the dinner table. It should be said here that Feuerbach loved having guests at his home, and was at present engaged in spending some unexpected, insignificant inheritance in gratifying his desire to play the host—thereby diversifying his drab mode of life, without counting the cost. So, the next evening, we went up and found already there two soberly garbed gentlemen, whose presence, after their names were mentioned in a ceremonious introduction, seemed to make my parents awkwardly self-conscious. Only after these men, with all the gestures of formal politeness, had taken their leave were we informed that Feuerbach, as the author of a certain book, had just been made the recipient of official commendation—for a book, by the way, which fell into my hands later, and in which he addressed adolescent youth in a most poetic, but easily comprehended manner. Soon, a scant number of other guests arrived, friends and relatives—faces, gray in gray, now lost from my memory. But this I still remember: Gutjahr's mother waited on the unpretentious festive table around which we sat, wearing a freshly ironed, white apron and a cheerful little cap on her hair;

but her features were set and, it seemed to me, hostile. (I had always been afraid of her, since the occurrence in Gutjahr's room.) Feuerbach sat at the head of the table, flushed of face, and responded to the casual congratulations of one of the men with a well-expressed, lengthy speech, the plan and weight of which gave the impression of extended deliberation and of having been prepared for a more formal occasion. Having at the most expected a witty reply, and not this scholastic oration, the guests assembled about the table applauded only half-heartedly, a little bewildered; evading each other's glances, they nervously tugged at their clothes and became monosyllabic. But of all this, Feuerbach noticed nothing; he sat there, flushed and happy. Mirjam's mother, at the opposite end of the table, looked about uneasily when her husband once more began to talk, with great unction and somewhat too loudly, of the Home and of the Education of Youth.

As to Mirjam—Ruben had been put to bed early—she was not sitting next to me. Only when the guests arose from the table and retired into the next room, to stand or sit in casual groups, chatting at random, did I happen to find her near me. We looked at each other, and could think of nothing to say. At last, she said dispiritedly: "Would you like to see some pictures?" I nodded happily, and followed her to a corner where a thick photograph album lay on a small table. There, we found ourselves in a peaceful cove, outside the commotion which filled the entire room beyond the breakwater of a row of armchairs with their backs to us. Into our tête-à-tête surged the confused buzzing of conversation and laughter. We stood side by side, turning page after page, and looked at indifferent faces, while our fingers touched. "Do you know him?" I would ask, ecstatically. And: "This woman has a child's hat on!"

Close by, in the armchair breakwater, sat my grandmother, surrounded by young people, men and girls; and her talk must have been more than usually humorous, for time and again laughter crackled up around her. When she turned a little, I saw her roguishly rejuvenated face. Her eyes shone, and her thin form vibrated with nervous energy. She smiled over at us, fleetingly, somewhat audaciously, in the sheer joy of living and self-forgetfulness. Then, she turned back and whispered something. The giggles of the others rippled up around her chair.

In the eagerness of our common interest, Mirjam had clasped my hand and forgotten to release it. We kept on turning the pages; I was intoxicated, but sharp of ear, at the same time. To the left, in a corner with Feuerbach, sat Mother and Father. My father, festively animated and proud of his knowledge, spoke impressively to Feuerbach, while Mother's shining, adoring eyes never left his face. They spoke of apparitions and clairvoyance, and gradually the entire room was listening attentively to their conversation—especially when Feuerbach began to talk about little Ruben, who, although still an infant, showed unusual, yes, extraordinary powers in this direction. It would not be seemly, said the thoughtful man, to say that the child was gifted with second sight. However, he was not only conscious of the most carefully concealed joy and the faintest trace of sorrow in the hearts of those about him and capable of feeling with them intensely: he likewise possessed the faculty of sensing distant happenings, natural upheavals and crimes, amid pangs of suffering. This statement brought forth violent protests from many of Feuerbach's listeners. They pointed out that it was sinful to burden the child with the weight of such a curse: the argument grew heated; voices were raised; questions and answers were shouted across the floor and all talked at once, making themselves heard from every corner of the room. Cigar smoke hung dense in the warm atmosphere.

In the meanwhile, the pursuit with which Mirjam and I had been occupying ourselves had lost its novelty. Not that we were listening seriously to what the others were saying, but the happy sentiment of being alone amid these many, noisy people was so overwhelming that we soon gave up the game of the album and just stood there, silent and motionless, our fingers touching.

Suddenly, the hubbub round us abruptly ceased. I turned and gazed, as did the others in the room, toward the opposite door. The door had opened, and there, astoundingly enough, stood little Ruben, staring about him with wide-open, unseeing eyes. His much-too-long nightgown hung loosely about his little figure and trailed behind him. There was a dead silence in the room. The boy shivered as with an inner chill and looked searchingly from face to face. Not one of the people, a moment ago so excited, moved. Presently, the eyes of the child fastened on Grandmother's face, and wandered no further. Amid the conflicting forces of clashing wills and desires, it was as though, in this exchange of looks, two worlds were silently drawn together and became one. I saw my poor grandmother, suddenly divided by invisible walls from the young folk around her, slowly rise. The child still stood motionless: only the corners of the mouth twitched in the pale, delicate face; they drew downward, and suddenly, big, glistening tears rolled down his cheeks. The whole frail body shook in silent misery. And still the people were held in the spell of leaden silence. Step by step, the child walked, slowly and unsteadily, with outstretched arms, tearfully, toward my grandmother. Then, Frau Feuerbach, with an exclamation of alarm, freed herself from her paralysis and ran to the little boy, lifted him into her arms, and hurriedly carried him back into the bedroom.

The effect of this very short and entirely wordless scene is indescribable. I can still see my grandmother, the focus of that gruesome loneliness, standing there and smiling. Her lips trembled in terror and forced gayety beneath her self-control. The blood had receded from her cheeks. Suddenly, she reeled. My father, supporting her by the arm, led her away. Mother followed, her handkerchief pressed to her eyes. Low-voiced conversations began to buzz. Chairs were pushed back; the talk stopped. Gutjahr's mother came in from the kitchen and rattled the dishes. The lights were extinguished. I was the last to leave.

THIS was a time of extraordinary, crowded and hectic events for me—and not for me alone. Mirjam had likewise become deliriously conscious of a mysterious awakening. One day—it was summer, once more—I met her in the middle of the courtyard, between a heavy truck, which at that moment was being loaded, with much noise, and a crowd of factory girls, homeward bound. She stood motionless, as if enchanted, in the dirt-strewn courtyard, unconscious of her surroundings, scrutinizing herself. A weblike slip of a dress covered her childish form, and just as a pair of truck-drivers plodded by on heavy soles, lascivious in look and voice, she glided her plump, brown little hands slowly and thoughtfully over her budding breasts and down along her thighs. With that, she smiled very tenderly, and her somber gaze seemed lost within her. When she saw me coming toward her, she nodded gravely and we spoke seriously of our school-work and such things.

At another time, I saw her down at the landing-place. There, over the heaps and piles of stacked building materials, a chase was on—a frenzied climbing, jump, run, and jump . . . she in the lead, always she, her tight, reddish, blond braids flying in the wind, wind in her dress, wind on her cheeks, wind all about her: and behind her, lustful and bestial, with the gleaming eyes of a wolf, Daffy Anton, the turner's apprentice, shaken out of his sluggishness, panting like a bulldog. He grabbed for her; she eluded him—jump, turn, side-step, jump . . . When I came nearer, she stepped up close to me and looked coolly into my eyes. But she was still breathing fast. Her pursuer, veering at the last moment, turned and trotted away, head bent, once more the dullard. "Do you know him?" I asked. "No," she laughed. "He was here—I was here . . ." We went on home together.

I left her in the courtyard, anxious to be with Gutjahr, whom I glimpsed standing in the hallway of the rear-house, leaning against the half-open cellar door, in an attitude of nonchalance that I well knew. He told me that he had taken a rat out of a trap in the cellar—a long, slender, horrible, gray-black animal, with evil eyes and bristly whiskers. He had knotted a heavy string around its left hind-leg, and he held the other end playfully with a watchful hand. The animal strove to turn round and bite through the cord. But whenever it tried this, Gutjahr would jerk it back by an abrupt tautening of the string; and then it would frantically scratch the dirty stone flagging in futile exertion, with sliding feet, and a cloud of dust would rise lazily into the air. This game must already have gone on for some time, for by now the rat had apparently lost its fear in complete exhaustion. Attempted flight and terror were now but a flickering flame. When we saw that this amusement was nearing its end, Mirjam suddenly appeared. Her eyes glistened. "Get a cat!" she said, under her breath. Gutjahr set out at once to look for one, and placed the cord in Mirjam's hand. She laughed hysterically, in great excitement, and chased the animal to and fro, with shouts and proddings. Suddenly, the rat whirled about viciously and snapped at her hand. She screamed and let go the string. The animal disappeared, rustling, behind some rubbish.

Gutjahr returned, carrying a little cat. "It is Abel's," he said. "I coaxed it out of the kitchen. Is the rat gone? Come on! We'll catch another one!" He went down the cellar steps, and Mirjam started to follow him.

My name was called from somewhere. I stepped back into the courtyard. Upstairs, my grandmother leaned out of the window and motioned to me. I went up. She was alone in the apartment, and when I entered, she was sitting on her bed in the parlor, where it had been ever since the occurrence at Feuerbach's party. I noticed that there were deep shadows under her eyes. Her whole frame was shaking in the grip of an inward chill, and with palsied hands she drew a prescription out of her pocket, fumbled for some money on the table, and said, with quivering lips: "Quick! . . . From the drug store!"

I ran. On the street, I met Anton and some other young loafers of our gang. "Come along! I must get something. Wait for me." Returning home, I met Father on the stairs. "Mother is upstairs. Help her. I am going for the doctor." In the anteroom, my mother, still in her hat and coat, her eyes filled with tears: "Go to your room." I went in and sat down on my sleeping couch. In the next room, where Grandmother was, silence. Mother walked up and down.

Outside, a glorious sunshine rebounded from every wall. The atmosphere was heavy and distracting. Beneath the window, Anton whistled. Gutjahr was also with the gang. I made it clear to them that I could not come down. One of the ragged hoodlums, holding a cigarette between his lips, ransacked his pockets and called up to me: "Match!" I threw him a box, which he grabbed out of the air with one hand, like a juggler. Another: "Me, too!" I did not have a third.

In the next room, the steps of my mother. Then, clear and serene, my grandmother's voice: "The shawl out of the lower drawer."

Downstairs, they whistled. "Throw something else!" Gutjahr tried to catch a little cigar box, pushing aside one of the others, who was also grabbing for it. It was a box I had been very fond of because of its rare, aromatic wood and its picture, the landscape of an island and a soaring angel. It broke when some one stepped on it. "More!" I threw down an apple, a penholder and a box of clasps. They were milling beneath the window, and every time I threw something down, there was scuffling and squabbling. Dust glistened in the sunlight. Heavy odors of cooking hung in the close atmosphere. In the next room, steps—Father's, the doctor's. Downstairs, they whistled. I fetched a large, empty hat-box, and threw it down. It had hardly left my hand when I was clutched with fear that disaster would follow this throw. I closed my eyes and listened. Howls and screeches. "More!" They whistled. I had no more to give. A wooden savings bank, my birthday present, I must not lose. I tied a string to it and lowered it out of the window, just far enough, so that they could not reach it. They jumped for it. Some one cursed. In the next room, groans. I pulled the little bank back into the room and closed the window. They whistled continuously. Furious rage had taken hold of them. Voices in the next room, among them the voice of my poor grandmother. She said, "I am afraid!" Downstairs, they whistled. I opened the window again, just a little, and lowered a heavy, green drapery cord—there was a huge ball of it under the couch. When they made a grab for it, I pulled it back. They jumped, clambering up the wall in their eagerness. I even let them touch it; then, I jerked it away, tense, with wildly beating heart. It was an exhilarating game, full of unexpected twists.

The door of the next room opened. My mother entered, dry-eyed, and closed the door cautiously behind her. "There is too much noise in the street," she said, weakly. "Go downstairs, my child, and tell them—that some one is asleep . . ." And, after a pause, in a very low voice, with the singing tone of suppressed weeping: "Grandmother is going to die!" She turned abruptly and tiptoed back into the other room.

How can I explain it? I did not go downstairs. I continued to tease them with the green cord through the window-crack, but the words of my mother must have caused me to become slightly confused and inattentive, for suddenly I realized that they had outwitted me down there. Out of a niche in the wall, which held the statue of the Virgin, some one jumped and seized the cord. It was Anton. I pulled my hardest upon it, but I was not strong enough. Gutjahr also lay hold of the line; it did not break, but it ran through my hands and scorched them. All threw themselves, pell-mell, on the captured cord. Suddenly, some one had it, and ran. They yelled and pursued him. He raced, looking backward, holding tight to his booty. The running footsteps died out. The street was empty.

I closed the window softly and stole outside. In the anteroom, I stopped and listened for a moment. Some one was breathing heavily. Downstairs, bending over the railing, was Mirjam. "The cat is gone!" I said: "My grandmother is going to die!" She came closer. "Is she going to die? . . . The cat won, but she is bleeding at the throat. Too bad you didn't see it!" She was flushed. Then: "The cat ran up the stairs. Will you help me look for her?" We climbed the stairs, past our door, past Mirjam's door. Now, we were on the top floor. "The garret door will be locked." It was not, and suddenly we found ourselves in the half-dark space.

There was a crib, upside down, placed on a trunk. Picture frames. A bread trough. Two tin buckets. A broken chest. A huge flower pot, with the stump of a palm. Three boxes. An iron wash-stand and, on top of it, a game of dominoes, a candle-stick, and the head of a doll. Gray spiders' webs, hanging in ribbons. And all the way across, through the blackness, crept the rafters. Dust started up, waving in the light of the garret window. Lofty and severe, two shafts of red brick: the chimneys. Behind them lurked darkness. Mirjam pressed against me, and whispered: "Do you see the cat?" I saw nothing. The silence around us was alive. We listened.

From the house came muted noises. Steps, the slamming of doors, and indistinguishable voices trickled into our quietude. Boards cracked. "There it is!" whispered Mirjam, and clutched my arm. It was nothing. Slowly, step by step, we went to the dormer window. I opened it. Outside, the sun brooded. When I turned, Mirjam stood, blinking, in the bright sunlight which drifted through the opening. I said: "There is blood on your dress!" "That's from the cat," she whispered; "we must find it!" Suddenly, she gave a start, and listened. "Some one is talking!" Now, I also heard it: two voices, women's voices, filtering, toneless and eery, through the walls. It was below us. "My mother!" said Mirjam. We were silent. Then: "The other is the janitress." "Frau Gutjahr?" "Yes," said Mirjam. "Here lately, she comes often." And in a very low voice: "She always asks Mother for money." Below us, the voices grew louder, intermingled, entangled. Mirjam stood crouched, absorbed in listening. Below, a cry, a voice—Mirjam's mother: "Nothing! Nothing! Nothing!" A door slammed. We were silent. Then, Mirjam again: "Some one is running across the courtyard." I looked down through the dormer window. "Frau Gutjahr," I said. Angrily, she hastened in a zigzag line across the empty space down there, and was lost in the shadows of the hallway of the rear-house.

"Now, everything is quiet," said Mirjam. She stood close behind me. I was afraid to move, and continued to stare through the window into the blue sky. A house-top across the way cut the red sun-disk in two. Mirjam whispered: "Do you know the name of the game I played with Anton to-day at the river?" I was silent, agitated and sad at the same time. She went on: "It is the game of the seven lives. It's my secret." And, after a pause: "Six, you can lose. Only, not the seventh!" Her breath fluttered. I felt it on the back of my neck and in my hair. But I did not turn around. She changed the subject abruptly: "You had a sword in your bed, that time!" The blood rushed to my face. I was ashamed. Quickly, I closed the shutters of the dormer, and we could not see each other any more. "Do you think I didn't notice how you trembled?" I heard the words coming out of the darkness. And again: "Were you really frightened?"

"Mirjam!" some one called on the stairs. "Mirjam!" "We must go down." Stumbling, we groped our way back, got into an exciting game of "run and catch" in the darkness, and at last reached the garret door and stormed down the stairs. Frau Feuerbach met us, a shawl about her shoulders, as though hastily snatched up for a hurried visit. Her disheveled hair almost fell into her wild, terror-stricken eyes. She turned to Mirjam with vehement, voluble reproach. She had been looking for her. A cat was missing. Did she know something about it? She, Mirjam, must stay with Ruben, because she herself had an important visit to make. Why did she have to look for her? Her voice was shrill. Mirjam hardly answered.

I hastened on to our apartment. While I was still in the anteroom, Father came out. "Grandmother has asked twice for you," he said. I followed him on tiptoe into the room. The air was heavy, stuffy, sourish. A hand thrust me close to the bed. The old woman lay flat on her back, stiff and motionless, her eyes closed and a peaceful expression on her face. From a corner, I heard my mother whisper: "She is asleep." Then, suddenly, two very clear old eyes looked up at me. I felt depressed and solemn. I was waiting for momentous, sad, final words. Grandmother seemed to be listening to something within her, to the last, most hidden secrets of her body, and she groaned softly. She said: "Did you do your home work?" And then: "It is very warm! We ought to get cooler weather, soon." She said it off-handedly, and something in her eyes pleaded for things commonplace. She turned to Father, and said lightly: "How was it to-day? Nothing?" I saw a struggle take place within him, saw him come to a decision, and heard him say: "I didn't want to tell you, because you are not well. I wanted to surprise you. But I'll tell you, anyway. I have found a position. As auditor. A long contract, and a very good salary." He mentioned figures and names. His voice was a little too loud. My mother looked at him, in startled wonder. I saw that he was lying.

Grandmother smiled, and did not answer. She had closed her eyes again, and lay there in serene cheerfulness. We sat in silence. Hours passed. Only once, the sick woman murmured, in her half-sleep: "I am afraid . . . afraid!" The lamp sang. Outside, it was night.

Suddenly, I started out of a wild dream. I had fallen asleep, sitting in the chair. I shivered with cold. My mouth was parched. The old woman was sitting, stiffly erect, in her bed. The ghastly, shadowed eyes flamed in her sunken face. "My clothes!" she cried, in a cracked voice. "My shoes!" She started to leave the bed. Her thin, heavily veined legs already protruded—dead, yet alive—from under the covers. My mother, her flushed face wet with tears, embraced the poor, quivering body and forced it back onto the pillows. Father stood, half turned away, near the stove. I went to him and said softly: "Shall I get the doctor?" He whispered:

"She doesn't need the doctor, any more!" The sick woman had given way to a new notion, and cried again and again: "Call the old grocer from next door! Call Frau Feuerbach! Call Frau Gutjahr! Call the watchman's wife! Call the watchman!" They tried to pacify her. But without warning, she tore herself free, jumped out of bed, and stood in the center of the room, her fluttering nightgown revealing her death-like nakedness, and shouted: "Call them! Call everybody! Let them all come!" Father carried her back to bed. She pleaded, in a small, terror-stricken voice: "Call them! Please, children! It is a matter of life or death!" Without a word, my father left the room. I went to the hall door, and heard him climb the stairs and knock, and climb and knock again, and talk. In the room, all was quiet again.

Then, people came. Blinking, torn from their sleep, half dressed. Carrying candles and lanterns, they came up the dark stairs, passed me silently, and went into the room. I hardly recognized them. For a moment, I saw Frau Feuerbach and the fruit vendor and an old man who lived across the street. But when I tried to follow them, I could hardly squeeze into Grandmother's room, it was so filled with people. They stood in little groups, clearing their throats and whispering. They all talked hastily, without cessation. Finally, I managed once more to reach the foot of the bed. The old woman listened with all her faculties into the confusion of voices. "Louder!" she said. "Louder!" "Louder!" she said, time and again. Then, she stretched out full length. Very suddenly, her face changed, grew chalk-white and sharp. Once more, it became animated with great astonishment, and a voice, coming from far away, said high and clear, yet filled with weeping fear of the loneliness: "It is not hard to die!" Then, she fell, snuffed out, into the abyss. . . .

When I turned away, I saw the last of the visitors crowding on tiptoe out of the room. I followed.

In the kitchen stood my good mother, big tears streaming down her face, preparing coffee at the gas range for her guests. It was morning, now. . . .

THE AX FALLS

"IT HAS come over me that I want to see it preserved. In one corner of the soul, there still remains the child, who is despondent, and weeps, and wants to live . . ."

Whither am I drifting? Whither am I drifting, away from myself? What I am to-day—of that, we shall not speak. The curtain has been rung down on the drama of "I"; the asbestos drop has been lowered. Man writing this, who are you? It has come over you that you want to see it preserved. But you have finished with those early, tender years, for which you were once so concerned; you are almost beyond them. And yet do you weave on? And yet do you continue to write? You want to see it preserved, and the rest as well, those later, confused, personal experiences, and others as well that you know of only by hearsay. Knowledge that was brought to you, but also other knowledge that you gained by stealth and cunning. Surreptitious knowledge, but also such knowledge as only the ghastly vision of blinded eyes can draw forth into the light through impenetrable walls from beyond.

Life! Now, we are tossed about by shifting hurricanes, and then again, through dragging years, not a breath of wind stirs. From my twelfth to nearly the end of my seventeenth year, my life was inactive and uneventful; to my retrospective gaze, it lies, gray and hazy, as if in a fog. The reason for this, aside from the irregular tempo, common to every existence, at which I lived, was a dearth of emotion which, whether curse and blessing, was already manifest in me at that time. Even then, at times it seemed to me as though I stood entirely isolated, a second entity, beside another I which lived and suffered, and that, in the deepest sense, this passive I had not the slightest interest in the comings and goings of the other I that moved my hands and bore my countenance. I became aware of this for the first time, in a horrible manner, at the grave of my poor grandmother. When the first clods, with dull thuds, fell on the top of the casket, all her relatives—and not they alone—were in the throes of uncontrollable grief, lamenting and weeping in their misery, while I, all my senses alert, curiously dissected my tearless apathy and, with an unquiet conscience, at once turned facilely back to every-day concerns. I remained unmoved.

I remained apathetic when, shortly afterwards, my parents packed their trunks and moved to a small Moravian town, where my father had secured a position as comptroller in a sugar factory. I remained apathetic—I having been left behind in the big city to continue my schooling—when Mirjam's mother, lovingly sympathetic, sought to ease my loneliness. It almost came about, incidentally, that I went to live with her; she was just then looking for a boarder, but a conference upon this subject between my father and Frau Feuerbach resulted, for reasons unknown to me, in nothing. Perhaps the compensation she asked was beyond my father's means. Instead of that, I was lodged in our old apartment with the new tenant, and I had only to move my belongings from the dining-room into the little room facing the courtyard, that had been Grandmother's. As to this new tenant, his name was Birkmeier, and he was a heavy-set man in the prime of life, wearing a blond beard. He always spoke in a booming voice, and I remember that he wore, in summer and winter alike, a soft, green felt hat, adorned with a cock-feather. He had a florid complexion and features of obtrusive good-fellowship, but his protruding, red-veined eyes shifted in obvious cunning. He had taken the apartment at the suggestion of Johannes Abel, in whose factory he held an important position—that of assistant manager and technical director; a position, by the way, created only lately, because of a sudden increase in business.

Abel had taken advantage of favorable conditions, and had sold a part of his real estate holdings. The cash he realized through this transaction he had employed in the purchase of various indifferently successful concerns in other suburbs, thereby creating a chain of small manufacturing plants. He managed to retain the customers of these concerns by using the old trade-marks and, combining the financial operations of all into one (his own) hand, he endeavored to establish them on a more profitable basis. He discontinued the troublesome and unprofitable production of small articles—pastries, confectionery, and other such sweets—and gave orders to manufacture in all his plants only plain chocolate bars, achieving by this means a very considerable simplification and clarity of the combined business, which made possible for him another advantage, that of purchasing the necessary raw materials—Javanese sugar and imported beans—in enormous quantities directly from the exporter himself, thus excluding the European middlemen.

This international buying entailed much traveling, and presently Abel was spending more time in the offices and bars of Hamburg and Amsterdam, Genoa and Trieste than in his factories, where Birkmeier tyrannically took advantage of these absences of the proprietor, by a hundred petty orders, to let every one feel his authority as acting manager. During these periods, the man was voluble and affable at home, patted his daughter Helga on her plump and somewhat pasty cheeks—she would accept his caresses apathetically, cuddling up to him with a bored look—or he would lead Reinhard, his son, who was three years older than I and acted in an unnatural, child-like manner, with interminable technical explanations through the factories, and he would insist upon his wife, Frau Birkmeier, a tall, skinny, meek, sexless woman, meeting him in her Sunday finery at the office every evening and walking home with him. If all this was not exactly agreeable to the members of his family, they were nevertheless pleased to see him in such good spirits. However, this pleasant exaltation would suddenly turn to the other extreme when Abel returned from his trips. Then, Birkmeier would become grumpy, irascible and taciturn; he would storm if the soup was cold, cuff his son, call his daughter—who would seek refuge in the bathroom—vile names, and slam the doors.

I myself, reluctant witness to such scenes, would have preferred to make more frequent visits to Mirjam and her family to escape from this atmosphere, but there also the years had brought many changes for the worse. A marked coolness, which, doubtless because Father had declined Frau Feuerbach's offer to board me, had taken the place of the sympathy first shown me, left me totally unprepared to hear, one day, that Mirjam had left the city, to take a position as paid companion to the daughter of a Count, on his secluded country estate near the Swiss border. This was about two years after the death of my grandmother, and I think I do not err when I surmise that the fourteen-year-old girl came to this decision at that time chiefly in order to relieve a parental menage that showed unmistakable signs of genteel poverty.

But there must have been still another reason, for Frau Feuerbach, who, during the years following, was at times very communicative, always spoke of Mirjam's departure with a sort of insincere sadness that engaged my attention. One heard no more of festive hospitality in Feuerbach's apartment; and through a casual remark of Birkmeier's, I learned that the rent for the fruit-garden behind the rear-house had not been paid for some time, but I only gained a more complete knowledge of the situation through a conversation with Frau Feuerbach, who, one day, unexpectedly began to tell me how their small inheritance had been used up by the expenses of Ruben's birth, by illness and parties, and that her husband's scanty income, derived from books and other writings, did not suffice to furnish even the bare necessities of life. She explained all this in a frank—indeed, almost brutally frank—manner, at great length and with a flushed face; and I had the impression that she addressed these revelations to herself, rather than to me, a boy at that time hardly fifteen years of age. Yes, she went further than that: she so excited herself with her own recital that she deplored, with bitter self-reproach, the circumstance that chained her to an ageing man, a gloomy, woebegone recluse.

But she did not say this at all vindictively; it simply burst from her, so passionately and so entirely devoid of any suspicion of levity that it made a deeper impression on me than I was aware of at the time. I see her yet, a woman of mature beauty, proudly bearing the weight of her luxurious, auburn hair, her magnificent body clothed in fanciful, flowing garb. Beside her, Feuerbach's gray, stooped scrawniness indeed faded; only the boy Ruben seemed to fit in with the picture of his mother, a tall, slender child, with brown curls, a well-proportioned form, and serious, penetrating eyes that in no wise betrayed the fact that his mind was less perfect than his body. It must be said, in explanation, that Ruben Feuerbach confronted life in an appalling helplessness, with a torpid listlessness of intellect that had, after two lugubriously unsuccessful attempts, excluded him from the public schools. He grew up in seclusion; he stood silently at the windows and in the corridors, his beautiful eyes staring out into space.

This was a sad condition of affairs, and it was not improved by the fact that Frau Gutjahr, after giving up her occupation as janitress of the front-house, moved in with the Feuerbachs as general servant—an expedient in violent contrast to the ever-increasing pecuniary embarrassment of the household. Despite their marked difference in class and education, there existed a sort of hostile friendship between Frau Feuerbach and this Frau Gutjahr—an ambiguous partnership, soldered with dynamite. Frau Gutjahr had given up her own rooms all the more readily, as her son, together with Anton, the turner's apprentice, had suddenly disappeared, shortly after an unsolved burglary in a tailor-shop—an occurrence which gave rise to so many contradictory rumors that it is impossible to recount them here.

Undesirably situated as they were, the rooms vacated by Frau Gutjahr were without a tenant for quite some time. But, one day, shortly after my enlightening conversation with Frau Feuerbach, I saw Birkmeier in excited controversy with a short, exceedingly frail, long-nosed person, who insisted emphatically that he had rented just those two rooms, kitchen and bedroom, in the rear-house. When he began to search the pockets of his shabby suit for the receipt of an advance payment which he claimed to have made to Abel, a loose packet of miscellaneous papers fell to the ground, and business letters, bills, advertising cards, and the like lay scattered about on the dirty flagging. When the little man stooped to pick them up, Birkmeier, having become curious, pounced on one of the papers and, in his sonorous voice, despite the voluble protests of the other, read aloud a brief legal notice to the effect that one Samuel Klein must vacate a certain apartment or face eviction. Before this scene could develop further, Abel entered through the archway and curtly ordered the suddenly obsequious Birkmeier to give the new tenant the necessary keys.

An hour later, a two-wheeled cart, packed high with wretched household goods, turned in from the street. It was drawn by a black-haired woman, extremely dirty and shabby, assisted by a frail, homely boy, with an old face, wearing spectacles and with a man's derby on his head. Alongside, behind and in front of the vehicle trotted four or five other shoving, jabbering, gesticulating children, all trying to help and continually scampering about—miserable brats, half-starved and plainly in dire need, who might easily have been mistaken for one another in their startling ugliness.

When the others had disappeared into the rear house and only the boy with the spectacles remained behind to watch the cart, Reinhard Birkmeier went up to him. He circled him twice; then, pointing up to Feuerbach's windows, he said, with a smile rather more foolish than hostile: "Up there live some more Jews!" The boy thus addressed stared back at him soberly and coolly, and was about to reply, when a thirteen-year-old girl, the oldest of the brood, her face hard and worldly-wise, came back into the courtyard. "Don't answer, Ignaz!" she said. Without another word, the two began unloading their belongings and carrying them piece by piece up the stairs, while Reinhard Birkmeier stood obstreperously in the doorway. I had witnessed this incident from the window. When, later, I went down into the courtyard, he came up to me and explained at great length that he had been ordered to keep a watchful eye on their doings. "They're like bedbugs, these Jews!" he said, in a loud voice.

I myself became acquainted with Samuel Klein and his family about a month later, under rather extraordinary circumstances. Coming home from school, I had met Feuerbach in the vicinity of the house. We walked along side by side. As usual, he was taciturn, wrapped in troubled thoughts. When we entered the courtyard, we noticed simultaneously a yellowish-gray, dangerous-looking smoke emerging from the hall-window on the second floor. "Fire!" shouted Feuerbach. We ran across the court, opened the windows in the smoke-filled hallway, and pushed forward. Some of the factory girls joined us and followed us up the stairs. Indisputably, the smoke was coming out of Klein's kitchen. We opened the door.

On the kitchen stove stood a huge, tin basin, filled with a black, obnoxiously odorous, lazily bubbling, viscous fluid. So thick was the strangling smoke in the room that one could hardly see the opposite wall. In the bedroom—the connecting door stood open—the smaller children, silent and indifferent, crouched for air before the open window. Klein and the woman were not there. The boy with the spectacles came toward us. "We are making shoe-polish," he coughed. He pointed to a row of shining tin boxes on the window-sill. One of the factory girls said: "The old people peddle the stuff on the streets." She laughed and coughed from the smoke.

Meanwhile, Feuerbach had crossed over to the bedroom and, deeply touched, was gazing upon the pitiable misery which cried out to him from every corner of the room. I went up to him. With a slight movement of his hand, he drew my attention to the solitary bed which it contained. Turning to the oldest child, the girl, he asked, in a trembling voice: "You sleep here—all of you?" There was deep emotion and a richness of awkward sympathy in his terse question, but the girl only glanced fleetingly at him out of her misery-hardened eyes and, without answering, went to the window and looked out. I turned away, so that I might no longer witness the fearful abashment and agonized self-reproach in Feuerbach's face. When, shortly afterwards, I looked back from the kitchen, he also had gone to the window, and stood there, gazing out over the heads of the children, with an indescribable look of sadness, torn by conflicting emotions, into the place which had once been his garden, but which, neglected for the last two years, was now being used as a dumping-ground for the factory. His lips moved with unspoken words.

At that moment, a great sound of stomping and clattering came from the hallway, and something stumbled, sprang and hopped up the stairs. Samuel Klein's grotesque figure rushed in at us through the door. Unceremoniously, he pushed his way through the gaping women. "What has happened?" he asked, tonelessly, and kept repeating: "What has happened?" His eyes, frantic with terror, wildly circled the room, groping from child to child; then, they became more rational, and numbered them one by one: "Blanka!" A strangled cry. "Blanka!" It was a ludicrous spectacle to see this misshapen body torn and shaken with bitterness and terror. The oldest one pushed herself by Feuerbach and said, ill-humoredly: "Why must you shout like that? I can hear!"

As soon as he saw her, without any intermediate change, an expression of complete composure settled upon the features of the man. He had regained his self-control. He stiffened, turned on his heels, and said: "Is there something I can do for you?" This new manner intimidated the factory girls, and they left the kitchen. Klein closed the door behind them, and while I helped Ignaz lift the tin basin from the stove, he walked over to Feuerbach, who still stood gazing down into the garden, and scrutinized him for fully a minute. At last, with a start, the man emerged from his revery and noticed Klein. He groped uncertainly for his worn bill-fold, extracted a small note, and extended it to Klein with a half apologetic air. "Will you allow me?" he said. "Just a little loan . . ." He placed the money on the bed, and flushed a deep red. "I am a Jew!" he added, in a low voice. "Excuse me!" he then stammered, in sudden confusion, and fled hastily. I followed him. Samuel Klein looked after us, suspiciously and soberly, from the top of the stairs.

Next day, meeting me in the hallway, Feuerbach invited me into his study and presented me with one of his books, which, unfortunately, I lost shortly afterwards, without having read it. I still remember the title: "Germany's Bygone Days." No doubt, I must have looked somewhat embarrassed when I held this unexpected gift in my hands, for Feuerbach said, significantly and with sensitive seriousness: "Are not we all Germans?" While I did not wholly understand the connection at that time, yet it seemed to me as though the gift and the words had something to do with the incident in Klein's apartment. Nothing else of consequence was said, for Frau Feuerbach entered the room, loquacious and affable, and urged me to visit them more frequently. Then, Ruben appeared, quietly went over to the flowerpots, which filled the entire, broad window-sill, and cautiously sniffed at a half-open pelargonium blossom. "That is my garden," said Feuerbach, with a smile.

At Birkmeier's table, the conversation often drifted to Klein and his family. The corpulent head of the house was not less embittered toward Abel than he was toward the new tenant on account of this unwelcome invasion of "the Egyptian plague," as he called them; and I learned from him that the grimy-looking woman was not Klein's wife, but his sister. That he was a widower, Birkmeier knew through having delivered his registration form to the police. Nevertheless, Samuel Klein tried hard, but in vain, to secure Birkmeier's good-will, for Birkmeier—if one cared to believe him—ignominiously rejected every one of these insistent advances. "I threw the Jew down the stairs," he would say, and: "The Jew is trying to worm his way into the factory. He is trying to bribe me."

It was indeed not inconceivable that Klein had some such purpose in mind, for his own undertakings always ended in disaster. "He has no working capital," Ignaz once said, his eyes very serious. After the attempt with the shoe-polish, the man had tried selling specially prepared cleaning-cloths for shop-windows; then, picture postcards of nude women; then, rubber heels, which were just becoming popular—but everything failed. And hunger lurked in the eyes of the children. Once, I saw the harassed man near the depot. He wore a porter's cap and was carrying a trunk, apparently of no more than ordinary weight, with tremendous exertion on his crooked shoulders. He deposited it on a wagon, and when he had received his piece of silver, he leaned against a lamp-post and slowly slid down to the pavement. There he sat, panting, for some time, between rolling wheels and tramping feet. Finally, he rose unsteadily and returned to the platform. The following month, he went from door to door as an insurance solicitor. But if some one mistook him for a beggar and handed him money, he would take that also. "God smites him!" said the twelve-year-old boy with the spectacles. Blanka, who stood next to him, whispered tensely, "I wish I were older!" Her white, sharp-cut face was already that of a woman.

TIME rolled on—rolled by me, unnoticed. Before I realized it, I was an awkward, raw-boned youth, with fuzz on lip and chin. Shortly before my seventeenth birthday, I visited my parents in the Moravian town where they had gone to live. I went to people whose faces had become blurred in my memory, and I found people whose faces really were blurred by small-town monotony and care. In the few years during which we had not seen each other—we had always made plans for visits, and always postponed the planned visits for monetary reasons—my poor mother had become broad of hip and moved about heavily, and her lachrymose affection made me rather sad than happy. My dear father, embittered and old before his time, taciturn and misanthropic, evaded all conversational advances. And so nothing remains in my memory of this visit but the picture of a long, wide, rutty, muddy street, flanked by low, monotonously white, calcimined cottages. After that, everything was relegated to the background by the necessity of augmenting within a year my scanty knowledge in the various academic subjects to an extent which would make it possible for me to pass the final examinations.

I had not, however, progressed very far when this obnoxious obligatory study was arrested and superseded by startling events—events, the original cause of which lay far outside, outside of city and country, outside of humanity itself, perhaps: a prince had been shot, a nation demanded satisfaction, another nation refused to give it. Somewhere in the regions below, a colossus stretched its limbs, eager to arise. And by reason of all this, one quite naturally forgot the importance of the forthcoming examinations. Despite my superficial knowledge, I passed them without much difficulty, thanks to the cursory questions of the absent-minded teachers; and, my blood flowing no faster, my mind perfectly at ease, I thereby derived my first benefit from the approaching cataclysm. I remained calm and indifferent when, upon returning home from the examinations, I found Birkmeier in festive excitement at the dinner-table. He spoke in detail of the resolute tone in which some diplomatic note had been written in answer to another diplomatic note, at a time which he did not hesitate to term Germany's supreme hour. The sword was forged. We all left the table in holiday spirits, which could not be dampened by an entirely different scene which I witnessed some fifteen minutes later—a scene, insignificant in itself, but worthy of mention.

A singular comradeship had developed between Ruben

Feuerbach and Samuel Klein's children, a peculiar connection that was not without a certain one-sided, gushing extravagance. It was Ignaz especially who attached himself to the quiet child. For hours, he would remain near the boy, who paid but slight attention to him and calmly went about his own little games and pursuits—a nod here, a smile there, a quiet roaming among rubbish and boxes. Only when Blanka joined them did he become livelier, brighter, and even vivacious. Blanka possessed Ruben's adoring and unquestioning affection. With awkward hands and shy, tender, infantile words, he would stroke her cheeks and hair; with shining eyes, he would link his arm into hers: and she, already carrying on her tender shoulders the burden of household cares, had to employ many a subterfuge finally to rid herself of him. After a while, she no longer let his presence interfere with her duties; she did not even hesitate to permit him to see her engaged in the occupation to which she was lately devoting herself with passionate enthusiasm—she had become aware of her body, and was cultivating it. Once, I saw her with a cheap mirror, probably a remnant of one of Klein's disastrous enterprises, scrutinizing her sharp, pale features, not with the vanity and those self-admiring contortions that children usually indulge in, but with cool judgment, as one would inspect merchandise. In doing this, she paid little heed to the cleansing which her body and clothing obviously needed, but would rather endeavor, in her untaught way, to emphasize and make effective the curve of her eyebrows, as she had doubtless seen grown women do, by cleverly shading them with soot or charcoal.

The admiring, smiling Ruben was a welcome audience during these scenes, and the occurrence which I am about to describe was the consequence of one of them. I was about to go to my room after the thrilling conversation with Birkmeier to which I have referred, when I heard hasty steps coming down the stairs. I went out into the hall, and there Feuerbach, bare-headed, came rushing by me, followed by Ignaz Klein, who must have fetched him, and who was now shouting after him: "By the factory, at the last window!" Having become curious, I followed them; but it really was not worth the trouble, for it was little I saw. Blanka had taken a drop of red paint out of a tin can standing there to color the nails of her long, lean hands, and Ruben, coming close, must have stumbled over the can and upset it. The red fluid had spilled over the child's legs and stockings, and now he stood there, staring at the glaring discoloration. As there was nothing more to be seen than the stricken expression of unutterable horror on the face of the simple-minded, beautiful boy, it was incomprehensible, even sinister, to observe how Feuerbach drank in this spectacle. His eyes bulged; his knees gave way; he leaned against the wall, and his left hand pressed against his heart, while his right hand pointed unsteadily at the red spots on Ruben's clothes. "What does he see?" he asked, in a strange voice; and again: "What does he see?" Then, he took the boy, who was still in the grip of some undefinable terror, by the hand and led him into the house. The child now started to cry softly. Ignaz Klein had watched the scene attentively, and his pale face had grown still more pale. As for Blanka, she turned abruptly and disappeared into the rear-house.

Still, I did not perceive anything exceptional in all this, and soon forgot the incident. Light-hearted, dressed in my Sunday clothes and with money in my pocket, I mingled with the crowds which were gathered in large groups on the streets and in the squares, singing, talking, and exchanging news reports. If there was anything that could possibly have dampened my enthusiasm, it was a distressing meeting with Samuel Klein, on the corner of the main street. In the midst of a gathering of eager listeners, a rotund, well-dressed man had read aloud the contents of an extra edition—something about a last, a very last twenty-four hours of grace being extended—and a general hubbub of forceful remarks and emphatic convictions had begun, when, suddenly, a misshapen figure appeared in the crowd and the Jew, unabashed, excited, unstrung, sidled, like a rat, from one to the other, questioning, gesticulating, obnoxiously obtrusive. He wanted to know if it were really true—if there really was going to be a war. He asked it in a reproachful voice, and looked about him as if the decision depended on this or that person. Somebody said: "You won't have to shoot!" There was a burst of laughter. Klein kept on lamenting. Then, another voice: "A hero!" More laughter. The ridiculed man grew red in the face. "I am no hero!" he screeched. Some one went up to him and reprimanded him in crisp tones. Klein, sobered, suddenly aware of the pitiful part he played, slunk, without answering, around the corner. The incident was at once forgotten by the crowd, but somehow all the evening, as I loitered leisurely about the streets, I could not rid myself of the impression it produced on me.

But such discordant notes were drowned out by the swelling chords of a mighty music that was ascending as a pæan. To-day, after years of bitter experiences, I am obliged to write of those days, and to render in solemn truthfulness my account of those hours of magnificent, tragic blindness. A nation rose. In the streets, strangers smiled at one another. War! War! All that was taking place (so the reports read) was as a psalm of Teutonic dauntlessness. Menaced by enemies, surrounded by treason, the Imperial Emperor (so it was reported) had drawn the ancient sword. The country flamed. The women waved their handkerchiefs from the windows. War! War! What was happening (according to the reports) was the giving of blow for blow. It was a conflagration, beside which all other fires paled into insignificance; it was the jubilant outburst of a national energy (so the reports read) conserved and held in check for four decades in waiting for this one cry: War! Everywhere (according to the newspapers) was the most valiant patriotism. The people brought their gold and offered it freely. They converted their homes into hospitals. They charged their boys (so the reports read) to march forth, and called after them to win or die! Blow followed blow. Already, our armies had crossed the border. Liége was captured. Through the streets, they marched and sang. In the midst of a group of blond youngsters and singing girls, marched Feuerbach himself. His face was flushed. In his eyes shone the solemn joy of a fortunate destiny. Vigorously, he stepped along with the others. "Germany!" he cried. "Germany!" When he caught sight of me, he shouted something to me above the clamor. I could not hear him, and pressed closer. "Mirjam has come home!" he called, and waved to me. They sang on and passed me in marching tempo, light-hearted, with shining eyes and joyous laughter.

And there she was herself. I pressed toward her through dense streams of humanity. "Mirjam!" Arm in arm, we drifted along, amid the singing. One could not hear what the other was saying, so we smiled into one another's eyes without words. She had grown tall and beautiful, and wore her hair like her mother's, piled high on her head. "Germany!" they sang. "Germany!"—and we submerged ourselves in the common brotherhood. Only when the crowd passed our home did we separate ourselves from it and find ourselves in the solitude of the side-street. The shouting died away behind us. Then, the cloak of joyousness fell from me. I had nothing to say to her, and when she now addressed me in affectionate greeting, I ignored the warm pressure of her hand and evaded the frankness of her eye. "We must go home," I said, awkwardly. It had suddenly occurred to me that this strange, curiously developed person, despite her hair, look and walk, had no connection with the impetuous child of my memory. But she surmised nothing of this, saw nothing of it, and talked of her own affairs. She had come home to take a course in one of the nurses' training-schools which at that time were springing up all over the country. "And then?" She looked at me in astonishment, and said, in a matter-of-fact tone: "Then, I am going to the front." Not without a tinge of suspicion in her voice, she added: "And you? You are eighteen!" She said all this with a deadly seriousness I had never known her to exhibit before, and this unfamiliarity was intimidating and alluring at the same time.

I was spared the necessity of answering Mirjam's question by the appearance of Frau Feuerbach—we had just stepped into the hallway—who came down the stairs and told me minutely of the joy that Mirjam's homecoming, a few hours before, had given her. She was excited and, as she talked, her glance constantly returned in amazement to the slender girl who had so unexpectedly outgrown her, who was already sweetly matured, and whose shining, auburn hair crowned a smooth and innocent brow. It was as though her glances were searching in secret fear for the features of a child, her child, that she had borne and raised, as though they despaired of finding the lost one in this strange face. In her loquacity, she made some rueful mention of her lost youth, and at the same moment seemed to feel ashamed of having done so. "Mirjam!" she cried, suddenly interrupting herself, and drew her daughter to her. When she released her, there were tears in her eyes. She would have continued talking to us and to herself, but just then Johannes Abel greeted us from afar and started, hesitantly at first, then hurriedly, toward us. Frau Feuerbach hastily brushed back the hair from her brow, held her house-dress together at the throat, and hastened up the stairs.

All the while, Mirjam had stood, smiling and without paying particular attention to the verbosity of her mother, idly leaning against the wall. It seemed to me that she was listening, then, less to the words of her youthful mother than, in pure exaltation, to the secret flowering within herself. There was an attentive expression on her slightly inclined, beautiful face as she stood there. By this time, Abel had come up to us. He raised his hat, calling a word of apology after the woman running up the stairs; then, with a flourish of self-assurance, he turned on his heels to Mirjam: and I, who had stepped aside in all my old embarrassment but was too stubborn and awkward to take my leave, stood waiting and saw with astonishment how the suavity of this man, who stroked his graying beard with restless fingers, who laughed and smiled and knew how to emphasize well-turned phrases with meaningful glances, spoke sonorously and softly and, for fleeting moments, even caressingly into the ear of the girl, only to step back abruptly with the playful ease of a fencer—how all this persuasiveness left Mirjam untouched and, like fragile, dazzling tinsel, shattered to pieces with a slight, somewhat plaintive sound. Yes, and it seemed to me that there was something of a contest at hide-and-seek in Mirjam's carefully chosen answers, as though there lurked behind the cautious meaninglessness of her phrases an imp of laughter and danger, an innocent venturing of forces still dormant; and when, finally, repulsed but smilingly polite, Abel withdrew, a little pale and with poorly concealed annoyance, I once more stood, confused and in silent dejection, beside the playmate of my childhood, so surprisingly strange and matured. She remained leaning against the wall of the hallway with slightly bowed head, and suddenly she raised her hands and slowly glided them over her breasts and sideways along her thighs. I stood, clumsy youth that I was, in great confusion, and it seemed as though she had forgotten I was there. A few moments later, without saying good night or even turning her head, she left me abruptly and thoughtfully went up the stairs. I looked after her until she was lost behind a turn of the stairway. Then, I went to my room. I lay on the couch and, with wildly beating heart, stared for hours at the ceiling. Outside, they still sang.

The following day, a wretched but well-dressed person entered my room; a young man with thinning hair and a pale, pimply face, from which protruded a broad, straggly, brown mustache. "You don't recognize me!" he said, and after a pause: "I am Ulrich Abel." I was brusque and rude enough to tell him that I should never have recognized the undersized boy of yesterday in this overgrown, anemic being. He seemed to take this calmly, as a matter-of-course; and when he now, with twitching lips, pulled out his billfold to find his identification papers, he did so with the self-satisfied ostentation of an addle-pated person knowing himself in the right, rather than with irony and derision. I felt ill at ease and, to change the subject, I asked him if he had arrived unexpectedly, and how his father had received him. "The old man doesn't yet know I am here," he answered. "He wasn't home, and the apartment was locked. I left my hand-bag outside, in front of your door." The reason of his homecoming was not difficult to guess. "War! Have to report for inspection," he laughed. "The Fatherland calls!" His laugh turned into a hacking cough, and he spoke no more. We were silent.

Then, there was a knock at the door and Birkmeier entered, filling the little room with noise and masculine odors. The cook had told him that the son of the boss had arrived.

He had come right over. To be the first one to welcome him home was an honor and a pleasure. "We are going to be good friends!" he proclaimed, boomingly, and he took the slender, sickly-white hand of young Abel in both of his. He hurried out, promising to return immediately. I was obliged to enlighten Ulrich as to whom and what this loquaciously excited person was. Presently, he was back again, followed by Reinhard and Helga, his children, who, he assured Ulrich, would always be his friends and companions. These two grinned with impudent curiosity. Helga, behind her father's back, made a hoydenish grimace. But Reinhard, under the watchful eye of his parental mentor, stepped forward cordially and said to Ulrich, in a full-throated voice: "Welcome!" His spouse—so Birkmeier rounded out this impressive scene—was unfortunately not dressed to receive company; the young master would have to excuse her, for the present.

As to Ulrich, he could not arise to this scene. Worse than that, he failed entirely. He stood there, awkward and confused, and stammered unintelligible thanks. Then, on the pretense of having to look for his father, he sidled, nodding and stammering, in great haste out of my room—a procedure which Birkmeier did not allow to pass without criticism. To think that this inferior youth would at some future time be the sole heir of Johannes Abel's fortune—the thought filled him with pain and apprehension. Fortunately, the children of the other fathers had better breeding. Self-conscious at this remark, Reinhard smiled ruefully. Helga giggled foolishly. Then, they left me alone in my room.

This incident was repeatedly discussed, and always in the same tone, at Birkmeier's table. These joint meals were for me a never-ending source of news of politics and of the war—a cousin of Birkmeier's was a staff-officer—as well as news of the house and of the neighborhood. Thus, I learned of fresh dissension in the Feuerbach home; of a serious quarrel between Frau Feuerbach and the Gutjahr woman, occasioned by the janitress asking for—indeed, demanding—the rear room of the apartment for her son, that same Gutjahr who had disappeared under grave suspicions, and had now returned, no one knew from whence. He now loitered about the corridors and loafed in the courtyard, an uncouth, coarse individual, with a military cockade in his hat. He had been accepted for service, he informed me, and was only waiting for his equipment to join his regiment. His demeanor was of a humble servility which did not correspond with the cold, calculating look in his eyes. A deep scar ran across his close-cropped skull. He had volunteered for immediate service at the front, he said. This was quite true, but afterwards it was said that he had thereby procured his release from a reformatory.

Be that as it may, it was obvious that Gutjahr was not faring badly in the meanwhile. He slept and ate in Feuerbach's apartment, his mother having finally achieved her object; and during luncheon hour, and especially after closing time, he stood around with the factory girls. There were at least five or six of them who smiled intimately at him, and it seemed to me that he had chosen these friendships in a skillful and well-calculated manner. Once, when I went over to the group of chattering, giggling girls, they stopped talking and became plainly ill at ease. But Gutjahr said: "Don't worry about him"—and, pointing at me, added—"that's my friend!" Then, turning to me with a grin, he explained: "We are talking about the old man." I noticed that of the six girls, two or three spoke of Johannes Abel rather more intimately than could be explained without giving food for thought. When, afterwards, I made some remark to this effect to Gutjahr, he nearly burst with laughter: "You don't know that chippy-chaser yet!" He pulled a bar of chocolate out of his coat pocket, tore off the paper, and bit into the dark-brown mass as into a slice of bread.

ABOUT two weeks later came news of a tremendous and, as one hoped at that time, decisive battle, in which the enemy front was pushed back over a width of nearly three hundred kilometers, and in which more animate and inanimate war material had fallen into the hands of the victors than could be told. Confident, yet grave; intoxicated with the joy of victory, yet phrased with dignified restraint was this official announcement, for besides the overwhelming losses of the enemy there was also mentioned the loss on our own side, which was not to be underestimated. Therefore, nobody was surprised when the order came for a more stringent—in short, a final—mustering of all men of military age, in connection with an exchange of the Guards with some regiments in a city in the northeast of the Empire—a step necessitating the immediate transportation of all newly enlisted men to their new posts. And although a rumor trickled through that this unusual procedure was the result of a treasonable fraternizing of the troops stationed there with the inhabitants of this predominantly Slavic city, this startling news was naturally eclipsed by the glamorous report of that late military success. The joy of victory rose above everything, silencing all doubts. "Three hundred kilometers gained at the front!" they shouted in the streets. "One hundred and thirty-eight thousand prisoners!" they rejoiced. Crowds stood in front of the newspaper offices, pressed together head to head, and read the extra editions as they came still wet from the presses.

Early one evening, I saw Feuerbach in the midst of a similar crowd. He had mounted an empty beer keg in front of a popular café and, waving a newspaper in his outstretched hand, he shouted above the tumult. Those about him grew silent. Isolated and aloof, above the lifted faces, he stood there and spoke. I noticed that he wore no hat, and I could also see, although I was at some distance from him, that his clothes were disarranged, wrinkled and dusty, as if he had slept in them. "Friends!" he shouted. "Germans!" In a strained, hoarse voice, he delivered a well-constructed, scholarly, exquisitely proportioned speech, which suggested careful thought and deliberation against this special occasion. The crowd applauded and shouted huzzas. The flush of childish pleasure vied in the speaker's face with the pallor of exhaustion. When a street-car clattered by, making it necessary for him to shout the climax of his carefully prepared speech in order to make himself understood, I perceived how, suddenly, a great, ill-concealed fit of weakness came over him. I rushed up to support him, and caught him in my outstretched arms. He thanked me, nodded his thanks to the applauding crowds, and, leaning heavily on my shoulder, he said in a low voice, with an apologetic smile for his weakness: "That was my eleventh speech to-day!" He was tired, but happy. "I am going to bed," he whispered. His eyes glistened. I took him home.

We had no sooner entered the hallway than we heard the noise of a berating voice. On the first landing of the staircase stood Samuel Klein, and from above, from the door of his own apartment, Birkmeier hurled down at him a torrent of rebuking words, in answer, so I supposed, to some fresh attempt on the part of the Jew to approach him with some sort of a proposition. Klein stood there, pale, silent, and obstinate, without moving. From within the room, Frau Birkmeier must have asked the angry man something, for he turned and shouted back at her: "What does he want? He wants to bribe me! He wants me to ask Victor to exempt him from service at the inspection!" Then, turning back to Klein: "Judas in the hour of danger! There he stands! And he dares to show his face!" And, in a still greater paroxysm of rage, brought forth perhaps by some pacifying remark of his wife, he almost screeched: "Judas! Fine patriots, these Jews! Herr Klein, Herr Feuerbach! One is as big a hero as the other. To the firing-line!" he shouted. "To the firing-line!"

Feuerbach and I had stopped in the hallway to listen, and were hidden from Birkmeier by a turn in the staircase. And when Feuerbach now suddenly stepped forward and became visible to the raving man, who could not for a moment doubt that his last remark had been overheard—when Birkmeier now unexpectedly saw himself confronted with the fact of having coarsely insulted this tenant, whom heretofore he had always treated with cautious politeness, and saw that it was not possible to retract his words, he switched abruptly from his vicious ravings into a lengthy, high-sounding speech, in which he endeavored to set forth that, to be a German, to be a man . . . that the duty of standing shoulder to shoulder against the enemy . . . and that, on the other hand, the corroding influence of the alien element . . .

In the meanwhile, Feuerbach, hardly able to keep on his feet, pulled himself along by the bannister and slowly and painfully climbed up the stairs, while the words of the orator rattled about him like a sudden hailstorm. His face was drawn in deep exhaustion, and he gave no indication of being conscious of what Birkmeier was saying. He must have been still about ten steps away from the voluble exorciser of alien influences, when the latter, in the face of the man's steady approach, faltered in his speech and suddenly became silent. And when the other, breathing heavily, reached the landing and, resting, stood before him, Birkmeier's countenance was not devoid of a conciliatory expression. Feuerbach looked straight at him and said, in a weak voice: "You are doing me an injustice, Herr Birkmeier!" Then, once more, he turned toward the stairs and climbed on up to his own apartment. By now, the full-bearded man had again found his voice, and talked on after him, in anything but an unfriendly tone, but with the incorruptibility and the earnest virtuousness of a man who cares only for the truth and for nothing but the truth. What the esteemed Herr Feuerbach intimated, he said, was not quite clear. He was, of course, of the same age as the esteemed Herr Feuerbach, an age at which one is not called upon to go to the front; but he could at least conscientiously sustain his convictions with the knowledge of having relinquished the idea of volunteering only after a severe inner-struggle—for the benefit of his work and for the raising of his children, which, all things considered, was likewise for the benefit of the nation.

During this argument, I, slowly coming up the stairs, glanced up at Feuerbach. Still turned away, his head bent forward, his hand on the bannister, he stood and listened. He started to speak, hesitated, and listened again. Then, without a word, he went on with dragging footsteps, unlocked the door to his apartment, and disappeared. I looked down. Samuel Klein was no longer to be seen. Birkmeier, stiffly erect, returned to his own room. When I came in for supper, a conversation about Feuerbach was just being concluded. "And that daughter of his hangs out with Gutjahr!" Reinhard Birkmeier boomed in a mannish, still breaking voice. He had his ears boxed for the unseemly intimation which his expression conveyed.

After we had finished our meal, I went out once more into the courtyard lying in the shadows of late evening, and walked up and down. I was excited and depressed. Presently, I saw Mirjam leaning out of a lighted window, and heard her call into the darkness: "Ruben!" Out of one of the dark corners of the rambling court, the voice of Ignaz Klein answered: "He is here, with us." "Tell him to come up." There were whisperings in the dark, and again came the voice of the boy: "He won't listen to us. He won't answer. He is crying." The window closed and, after a little, Mirjam came from the hall into the courtyard. "Where is he?" she called into the darkness. "Here!" With groping steps she crossed the space, passing by me without noticing my presence. I heard her somewhere over there, trying to persuade her brother. The shadows of two children drifted into the rear-house. Mirjam returned, holding the boy by the hand. When she came close, I stepped into her path. "Is it you?" she asked, without surprise. I trembled, and my gaze searched for her face in the blackness. "I have heard something . . . about you and Gutjahr!" I said, in a low voice. For a moment, she was silent. Then, she laughed softly. "Silly!" she said. "You mustn't!" I said, and trembled. She was silent again. Then, suddenly, I felt her hot, firm lips on my mouth. Already she had left my side. "Good night!" she whispered. She disappeared with Ruben into the house. I remained in the courtyard, intoxicated and confused, and looked up at the moving shadows behind the Feuerbachs' windows until every light had been extinguished.

Next day, at the dinner-table, I was struck by Birkmeier's irascible silence. Still chewing, he rushed back to the factory. This continued for a week. Reinhard slunk out of the room when he appeared, and now even Helga's ears were boxed. But like her mother, she silently resigned herself to Birkmeier's inscrutable ways. Toward me, Birkmeier had a certain resentful, confidential communicativeness, but he only spoke—no doubt, merely to amuse himself—on subjects pertaining to the war and the peoples at large, repeatedly proclaiming the value of possessing an upright character. Of the alien element, one naturally could not expect this. It was an acknowledged fact that the world is filled with ingratitude. But as you make your bed, so you must lie. That was meant for the mighty, as well as the meek. A knowledge of having at all times upheld the standard of righteousness was the only consolation remaining. One could easily agree with Birkmeier, without really understanding him.

The cause of Birkmeier's agitation did not long remain hidden. It gradually became known that a new partnership was in the process of formation. Samuel Klein was secluded for hours each day with Abel in his private office, working out the details of some mysterious business. The Jew had given up trying to secure Birkmeier's mediation and, shortly after the scene in the hallway, he had gone to Abel personally, in an effort to interest him in his projects. After ten minutes of excited, sometimes rude, conversation, he had succeeded to such an extent that Abel, that same night, made him chief buyer with the powers of a junior partner, after a bitter conference in which Abel insisted on reserving the privilege of canceling the contract at any time. "All right," said Klein, after a short hesitation. "You won't want to cancel!" And so they came to terms.

For what purpose all this was done, could not be ascertained. Even Birkmeier—and one felt sure he was telling the truth—remained uninformed; and if there was anything that could sustain him during this sore trial, it was humility, perseverance and patience. He developed a terrific energy in both factory and office; he tormented the clerks and factory workers; half the night, he pored over books and bills—but Johannes Abel did not seem to take any notice of all his diligence. The truth of the matter was that this rivalry and the mighty exertion of man-power in the factory resulting from it brought Abel substantial profits, and accordingly, he employed every possible means to aggravate the hostility between the little Jew and the worthy. bearded Birkmeier.

"He buys, buys, buys!" said Birkmeier, one evening at the table, worn-out, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "He buys huge quantities of worthless stuff. Every day, I receive bills of lading from the shipping agents. Hills, mountains of garbage! He buys rancid vegetable oil. He buys candle-grease. He buys the shells of cocoa-beans—the shells that one usually throws away! To-day, he bought a carload of wet, fermenting, stinking sugar, or molasses. What do I know about it all?" Late that night, he went to the factory once more.

As for Klein, the fortunate turn of his affairs brought no visible changes to himself and to his family, unless one may term the transfer of the bespectacled boy from the public school to an academy a change for the better. Otherwise, the dirt and wretchedness amid which they lived remained unrelieved; the sister was as unkempt, the crowd of children as confusing as ever, and Klein himself, although successful at last, behind his taciturn soberness was the victim of horrible fears. Once, when I, returning from a festive demonstration, went up to him and, in my excitement, launched into interminable praises of the victory celebration which I had witnessed, he looked askance at me in silence out of red-rimmed eyes. Finally, he said: "Do you know what you are talking about, young man?" Then, suddenly shouting: "You are talking of war!" Then, quietly again, unemotionally, he said: "Three years ago, my wife died in a pogrom in Kishinev. They clubbed her to death with a hammer, in front of the children." He passed his hand over his brow. Then, he brought forth a blue card from his pocket. "Here is the invitation already!" It was a summons to appear before the recruiting commission. He turned and, without paying any further attention to me, went toward a heavily laden truck which just then rounded the corner.

BUT even then, I failed to see the light. Condemned to apathy, stricken by blindness, I idled away the days in a benumbing delirium. The whirling dance of a hundred half-events and of intermingling, shifting images is difficult for the retrospect glance to disentangle to-day.

Here, I see Johannes Abel, the trapper. I sit in the corner of a dusky anteroom to the factory offices. It is after closing time, and I am waiting for Ulrich. Suddenly, the old man bursts through a door into the room and pulls out of the lighted adjoining room a giggling, clumsily resisting Something into the twilight. It is Helga Birkmeier. She yields, looks stupidly now at him and now into space, while his hand, groping along her throat, feels the pitifully flat curve of her collarbone beneath the unhealthy, childish skin. Slowly, step by step, breathing heavily, they move through the room to the opposite door. A light flames up—Birkmeier. Startled, he steps back, flushing a deep red. Without moving, Abel stares into his eyes out of a passionately impassive face. And now, slowly, an offensive affability comes over the big man. His features melt into a forgiving, an apologetic smile. Turning about casually, as if he had seen nothing, he shoves his clumsy body through one of the office doors. And almost immediately, his booming voice can be heard in the next room, where the bookkeepers are working overtime. Helga, suddenly pliant in her heavy way, snuggles up to Abel. But the man, disgusted, removes his hand from the puzzled girl, and leaves. . . .

I wait for Ulrich no longer. I stroll up and down along the street. Mirjam will be coming. An hour drags by. It is late when I see her. "Mirjam!" She starts, recognizes me, smiles fleetingly, and is about to pass me with a casual greeting. "Mirjam!" I have come up to her, and reach for her hand. As she turns her startled, weary face to me, I see tears in her eyes; and when I raise her fingers to my lips, she pulls them away from me, and says, in a low voice: "Let me be! I can't . . . I can't stand any more!" And still lower, almost a whisper: "I have just come from the hospital!" The word passes between us like a breath of cold air. Only when we are walking home, side by side, does she overcome her weakness. In order to test the fitness of the young nurses for service at the front, the head surgeon had given orders that each one must assist at an amputation. And so, for about an hour, Mirjam had been obliged to hold down the leg of some poor unfortunate, while the surgeon, mask before nose and mouth, manipulated his knife; and she had seen the blood streaming over hands, arms, apron, and floor, while the invalid, amid groans, howls and frequent screams, squirmed in the narcotic dreams of his artificial unconsciousness. . . . All this, Mirjam tells me in a monotonous chant; her voice quivers and wails with suppressed weeping. I am silent. I am silent, for she has already disappeared into the hallway. . . .

The next day, I am leaning indolently out of the hall window of the rear-house and spy, diagonally below me, in the neglected space that was once Feuerbach's garden, the new managing buyer, Samuel Klein. He had given orders for the purchase in great quantities of scraps of the tinfoil and colored paper used in the packing of confectionery and chocolate, and the laborers have carelessly stacked case upon case of this rubbish in a disorderly heap. Klein, to estimate the mass, scrambles, hops, jumps and climbs about and, as a gust of wind whirls up dust and bits of paper, he interrupts his work with a curse, and coughs.

Far in the rear, somewhere through an opening formed by a loose plank in the fence, the boy Ruben has climbed into the old garden and strolls, his beautiful head deeply bowed, through the neglected place toward the man. The boy stops in front of a little pile of rubbish. He gazes down at it and, with a glad cry, he stoops and buries his hands in a heap of colored printed paper. Then, he looks searchingly about, and suddenly his eyes fasten themselves upon the man amid the boxes, and remain fixed upon him. Walking slowly at first, then faster, the colored papers in his hand, Ruben Feuerbach goes over and offers his gift to the amazed man, without uttering a sound. Samuel Klein steps back, sinks down on a box, and remains motionless. Then he brushes the back of his ugly hand across his forehead and, with a slow, awkward movement, reaches for the boy's gift. The two remain thus for a moment. But now the busy man has recovered from his surprise, and Ruben also strolls on, past the stacks of boxes, into the house. Klein counts and recounts the cases. When he has finished, he also leaves. I remain in the window and look out. Fifteen minutes later, the man comes panting up the stairs behind me. I turn round to watch him. With great difficulty, he pulls a sack up the stairs, toward the door of his rooms. "What have you there?" Klein turns his face toward me for the first time—a face that no longer shows the slightest shadow of his former terror, not the shadow of a shadow. "Supplies!" he whispers. Then, in a horribly roguish voice, with wry-faced cunning: "Potatoes! Potatoes! Potatoes!" . . .

The same afternoon, on the street. In a mob of running, cheering people—a General just passed by in a motor car—I see Ulrich Abel's pale face. He also is shouting. Then, he disappears again behind the wagons, horses, and flags. But another wave of this human sea suddenly washes him sideways to the edge of the street, and he stands beside me. His mouth is wide open, and he roars into the air with the full power of his morbid intensity: "Hail! Hail! Hurrah!" I put my hand on his shoulder. He turns, sees me, and laughs. "Why haven't I seen you lately?" I ask him, amid the hubbub. He cannot hear me, but he reads the words on my lips.

"The Fatherland!" he shouts at me; "The Fatherland!" And, into the street: "Hail! Hail! Hail!" He turns to me again, and shouts shrilly into my ear: "All of us—we are all of us going to be trampled and crushed underfoot!" On every side, the flags waved and waved. Ulrich raised his arms above his head, and a fresh wave tore him from the shore and, roaring, washed him toward the martial song of the marching troops. He had disappeared. . . .

Next evening. I lay stretched out lazily on the couch. A timid knock at the door. . . . Half asleep, I do not answer at once. But already some one has turned the knob, and Frau Feuerbach enters the half-dark room. She whispers: "Are you there?" I get up and bid her good evening. She is diffident and quiet, with none of her usual affectedness. It seems to me that she is shivering beneath her woolen shawl. "I am afraid!" she says, softly. "I was alone upstairs. Frau Gutjahr went out. Mirjam is at the hospital. . . . I'll sit down a moment, if you don't mind. . . . Ruben is always gone, too. I think he has just gone into the corridor, and suddenly he has disappeared again. When he comes home, I ask where he has been. He doesn't know." She went over to the window, and her silhouette, etched against the lighter sky, was like Mirjam's. "This is her mother!" I thought, with sudden warmth. She turned abruptly and said, in a brittle voice: "My husband has not been home since yesterday noon. I wanted to ask you to come with me to the police station. I will have to report him missing." I started: "Herr Feuerbach?" "Do you know anything about him?" She came close to me, and our eyes searched each other in the gathering darkness. "Do you know anything about him?" Her warm breath was on my face. Then, I turned the switch. We blinked in the light. I took my overcoat, and we went down the stairs.

There was commotion in the courtyard—Samuel Klein, trailed by a horde of laughing, shouting children. He also laughed, and I saw that time and again he turned and, putting his hand into his pocket, burying it in clinking coins, threw here and there a handful of pennies into the gang. He encouraged the scuffling that followed by egging on the greedy contestants still more, and when at length the urchins were inextricably confused in a wild, indiscriminate battle, he doubled up and slapped his thighs with hysterical laughter. In the rear house, a window was yanked open and the dishevelled head of a woman appeared in the lamplight. "Sami?" she called, questioningly. He raised his arm, threw his open hand twice into the air, and shouted: "Exempted! Exempted!" Then, he started to run, in ludicrous, hopping jumps, and disappeared in the darkness.

I went with Frau Feuerbach to the police station. We had to wait; then, we gave our report to an indifferent, sleepy official. His uniform was unbuttoned, and he interrupted himself to replenish the fire in the little iron stove. "What color suit?" he asked. "Initials on underwear?" "Does he drink? Is he sick? Do you think he committed suicide?" He was very sleepy, and we had to tell him, plainly and slowly, what he was to write, plainly and slowly, on the paper. When we stepped from the overheated room into the fresh air, Feuerbach was as good as dead to us. The woman was silent. When we passed a lamp-post, I saw two tears trickle down her impassive face. We went on without a word.

Under the next street-lamp stood Feuerbach. He gripped the steel post with his right hand. The left fumbled with his coat and felt for his heart. His eyes bulging, he stared into the blankness of a house-wall. He did not see us. I went up to him and supported him. "Herr Feuerbach!" I said; and again, more urgently: "Herr Feuerbach!" He started, recognized me, and greeted his wife with a labored smile. "Good evening! Good evening!" he said, in a low voice. With a trembling finger, he slowly pointed to a colored cockade in his hat, which was awry on his head. "Soldier! I enlisted!" He went with us, leaning his pitiful weight against my shoulder.

Next morning, I also received a summons to appear before the recruiting commission, and Reinhard Birkmeier showed me his at the breakfast table. Ulrich, whom I met later, called to me from afar: "Me, too! For to-morrow morning! Are you coming with me to-night?"

The day passed quickly for me, for there was festive excitement in Birkmeier's home over the summons of the son. The father stayed away from the factory—an unheard-of event since Klein had appeared on the scene—and, putting on a clean, stiff white shirt and collar, he went to the War Ministry, to get some information, as he said, from his cousin, regarding the transfer of the Guards to the Slavic town. The son, meanwhile, slouched with Helga at the big dining-table and addressed innumerable picture postcards in his painstakingly energetic hand. He did this as judiciously as if he were making his will. Then, with a pasty face, he ordered his mother to have a hot bath ready for him that evening.

Birkmeier returned at noon, laden with news. Even if one could—and there was no doubt about it—count on a victorious peace by the end of the year, nevertheless, one could not shut one's eyes to the fact that, at present, it was the supreme duty of all to carry on, shoulder to shoulder. And since the youth of the nation, in answer to their Monarch's call, were ready and willing—yes, eager!—to march against their arch-enemy in defense of the soil, one should grant them the opportunity to do so as early as possible. And so, after careful deliberation, the High Command had decided to send the new recruits two days from now, the day after to-morrow, to their first garrison, that new post of the

Guards in the Slavic city in the north-east of the Empire, where they were to receive a short training before entering active service. Helga looked stupid; Reinhard smiled a pasty smile; Frau Birkmeier cried. The head of the house energetically objected. One should follow the example of those in command: they are grave, but composed.

I passed the day, busy in an aimless way, and never quite free from an undefinable excitement. That evening, when I went to a suburban café with Ulrich Abel, I had all but forgotten the real occasion of this final spree. At a billiard table, faceless forms busied themselves in deliberate, resolute movements, to the rhythm of the drearily clicking ivory balls. We sat down at a table, looked at the illustrated papers, and were silent. "I told Gutjahr to meet us here," Ulrich said, abruptly. "Why?" At that moment, the expected one appeared in the doorway. He wore a stiff uniform, much too large for him; his cap was cocked sidewise on the back of his head, and he had a cigar in his mouth. He waved and came over to us. Ulrich rose, hurriedly paid the check, and said: "We'll take a taxi." There was still another person waiting for us outside, a heavy lout with a perpetual grin on his blubbering lips. "Don't you know him any more?" asked Gutjahr, poking the heavy one in the ribs with his fist. "That's Anton!" Anton gargled something in the way of a greeting.

We stepped into a taxi. "You are sleepy," I said to Ulrich, whose head had fallen far forward. "I'll get over it, by and by," he answered, and looked out of the window. We drove through an interminable suburban street, then turned into a dirt-road, flanked by trees. At a sign from Gutjahr, the car stopped abruptly. We sprang out into the mud—it had been raining—and found ourselves at the rear entrance to one of those questionable rural inns on the outskirts of the city that are so popular when the new wine is fermenting.

Through a latticed gate, we came into a garden with tables and benches. Lanterns were burning. Through a door at the left side, over wooden steps into a plain but roomy hall, the background of which was obviously much used, one could see a podium, a curtain, and some crude scenery for amateur performances and other such unpretentions amusements.

While out in the garden sat working men and small shopkeepers, with their wives and children, quietly eating their meals with a glass of wine, the crowd in the hall—at present still scant—was of a decidedly different character. Besides the similarly dressed males of all ages, foppish boys and youngish, silly old dandies, there was a score of noisy, plain-looking females, dressed in gaudy, cheap finery. At a significant movement of Gutjahr's head, several of them came over to us and led us to the rear of the hall, to a side-table, hidden by a screen from the gaze of the rest of the people in the hall. It struck me as curious that Gutjahr was acquainted not only with the girls that joined our party, but also with others of the eye-winking, hip-twisting women in the hall, two of whom I recognized as workers from Abel's factory; and this intimacy oppressed me. Ulrich, who had been so tired, so sodden with sleep, had left us for a moment, and since his return he was growing constantly livelier. He also evinced a remarkable intimacy in word and action with these girls, whom he had obviously met for the first time. Anton had left us. As for myself, this evening constituted my first manly exploit since I had graduated from school, and I meant to celebrate in it the proud freedom of my young maturity. But, to tell the truth, the new impressions that I gained had little in common with my longed-for adventure, and were—while exciting—also of a drab, flat nature, tending to but one meaning. Gutjahr, busy everywhere with whispers and beckonings, sat at our table only at intervals; and his absences became so frequent and so lengthy that the girl of his choice, after having looked for him vainly for some time, in a sudden fit of jealousy, shoved her chair beside that of Ulrich Abel: and he, although busily engaged with his own partner in a cooing squabble, including much tickling, squeezing and snickering, managed in some confusing way to do justice to his new companion, as well.

The opportunity of following all this in attentive observation was afforded me through the fact that my own partner—a fat, yet insignificant girl with a wart on her chin, who was apparently glad of my lukewarm disposition and obvious inexperience—was content to fill herself in mute absorption with great quantities of sausage and cheese—an occupation which she dispassionately interrupted every five minutes by raising her glass of wine to me, with indifferent gesture and an empty, amorous glance. Consequently, she and I—I never failed to respond by punctiliously emptying my glass—sank deeper and deeper into a fog of listless drunkenness. Through ever less transparent veils, I saw opposite me Ulrich Abel's nodding, shaking head. Red blotches appeared on his unhealthy face. His eyes flamed. His collar and the front of his shirt were open, and the wine ran over his hands. When the girl at his left, in a sudden attack of nausea, leaned her head on the edge of the table—she immediately fell asleep and snored—he began amusing himself by attempting to pull the chair of the other female from under her, an attempt that provoked—as long as it remained merely an attempt—shrieks of hilarity. But when he finally succeeded and the girl sprawled backward over the floor, she spit a flood of filthy curses into his face as she lay there, partly exposed. He grew pale. As he stood, leaning forward, I saw something dangerous come to life in his eyes. He stepped close to the sprawling girl and stooped, and she, suddenly silent, raised her arm before her eyes to ward off the expected blow or kick.

At the same moment, something else happened. The murmur that had been constantly growing in the hall for the last few moments rose to a shout: "Hail! Hurrah!"—and not far from us there came into view, over the edge of the screen that still separated us from the rest of the place, the upper part of the body of a man in uniform. He was a man of great rotundity, perhaps a baker in civil life, who, with his back toward us, had mounted a table to make a speech. The content of this rambling, bombastic address, encouraged and at the same time interrupted by the applause of the crowd, was of little consequence, and was, moreover, familiar to me from Birkmeier's table conversations. That, drunk, or reeling from some other causes, he had to be held in position by cuffs from outstretched fists visible to us, was after all not surprising at this hour and place. And yet, there was a certain manner in which he delivered his speech that caught my attention; and not mine alone, for Ulrich suddenly left his victim and stood by my side.

Heretofore, we had seen only the upper part of the body of the man and the hands supporting him, but presently, in his reeling and in the course of being pushed upward, he had turned around and we could see his face. It turned out that he was much more fat than one could possibly have imagined; and above his wrinkled paunch of a chin, hanging over the collar of his uniform, and beneath his tortured eyes, rolling in terror and nearly drowning in the fat of his cheeks, and from this face, showing not the least sign of drunkenness, but hopelessly bloated and indubitably created by God in an angry mood, words gushed, bubbled and flowed through twitching lips—forceful and impressive words which contrasted horribly with the bearing and demeanor of this uniformed buffoon. Ulrich Abel, whose eyes were glued to this undignified and mortifying scene, suddenly shouted with still greater abandon and frenzy into the frenzy and abandon outside his "Hail!" and "Hurrah!" and, gripping with both hands the cane-plaited screen that concealed us, he hurled it to the floor. The hall lay open before us.

In the rear, to the left, sat about twenty recruits plainly from the farm, gazing, somewhat frightened and without understanding, at the orator in the center of the hall. He was surrounded by a huge crowd. I saw Anton, Gutjahr and a number of laughing, shouting, applauding strumpets, apparently determined upon keeping the fat man on his raised platform, and taking their cue from another table which was situated to the left in the foreground near us. There, amid a flock of gaudily dressed girls, sat a young officer, not much more than a boy, whose vacant, good-natured features were puffed and flushed with excessive drinking. He had placed his sword, with its scabbard and belt, on the table before him and, reeling on his chair, shouting again and again: "Keep it up!" or "Faster! Faster!", he would bring the flat of the weapon crashing down on the wooden table, making the glasses dance and spilling the wine. Over there, on the level above, stood the fat soldier, jerking convulsively at each new crash or shout, and babbling over and over again the same demoniacally impassioned phrases. Suddenly, his little eyes dimmed. He wept.

At the same moment, an empty wine bottle, hurled by Ulrich, flew across the hall and shattered to pieces on the table of the young officer. Unconscious of the blood trickling down his forehead, he staggered to his feet and reeled slowly, unswervingly, purposefully toward us. His eyes bulged, and his left hand fumbled at his holster. There was a deadly silence in the hall. Ulrich stared, fascinated, at the approaching figure, his eyes flickering in his now bloodless face. The officer, swaying drunkenly, was about three yards away from us, when his dragging feet caught against the overturned screen. He lost his balance and, falling heavily forward, lay there, motionless, his face to the floor.

What then ensued was at the same time unforeseen, repulsive and horrible. The hall went berserk. The fat man, with catlike agility, had slipped away from his tormentors and disappeared in the commotion. But others—four, six, ten of the peasant recruits—suddenly threw themselves in a drunken rage against the milling mob, swinging glasses, chairs and cudgels. Shrieks and moans. Some one—a giant—was kneeling on top of the fallen officer. He had turned the uniformed figure around—one could now see the boyish face, relaxed in unconsciousness and covered with blood—and was shaking it viciously, so that the head of the victim hit against the floor with dull, rhythmic thuds. At this, he howled obscenities, and his inflamed eyes shone with a lust for murder. Two or three girls vainly tried to pull him away.

Ulrich Abel was leaning heavily against my shoulder. He seemed burned up, exhausted, as though all his energy had been spent in hurling the wine bottle. Only his eyes flickered. He turned and slowly walked to the rear of the place. I followed him at a distance, and found him behind a piece of scenery on one side of the podium—I remember that it was crudely painted in the outline of a castle. He stood in a corner with his back toward me, and did not hear me. I looked over his shoulder and saw that he had buried the point of a hypodermic needle into the skin of his arm. I called to him. He turned calmly, and said: "I'll be all right in a minute."

Unexpectedly, Gutjahr stood beside us. "The police are coming!" he whispered. We ran through a deserted bar—the glasses rattled—and climbed through a low window onto a very quiet side-street. We ran and ran, around corners and more corners. The noise died down behind us. Gutjahr had suddenly disappeared. "I think he went back," said Ulrich. At one of the corners, he stopped and bade me good night. "I still have somewhere to go." His lips twitched. "To-morrow morning, at seven!" When I was already on my way, he called after me: "The Fatherland! The Fatherland!" It echoed from the sleeping walls like sardonic laughter. The sound of his footsteps disappeared up an obscure alley. A gray, wet, cold, foggish dawn crept over the housetops in the east. I went into the stinking atmosphere of an overheated coffee-house, and there, among porters from the market and husky farmers' wives, I fell asleep in my chair. When I started up out of a heavy dream, it was nearly seven. I boarded a street-car and went to the recruiting station.

An immense hall—in peace time, it might have been a dance pavilion. Around dirty tables, slumped in their chairs, are men of all ages. Muffled in overcoats exuding dampness—the early snow splashes, melting, against the window-panes—they sit, brooding. Time passes, slowly—very slowly . . . eight o'clock . . . half-past eight . . . nine o'clock . . . nine-thirty. At eleven twenty-two, a door is thrown open, and twenty or thirty lads trample down the wooden stairs into the stale cigar smoke. On their hats are jolly cockades, with little bouquets and tiny feathers. They are silent; they form into line and are led away. A thin little man with a gray mustache turns to me. "Now, they'll be sworn in!" he says. On the wooden steps, a man in uniform shouts hoarsely: "Group Number Fourteen—all numbers over three thousand eight hundred and fifty!" Here and there, some one gets up—I among them. Up the wooden stairs and along echoing, bare corridors. Not far from me is Reinhard Birkmeier. Suddenly, I find Ulrich is at my side, looking rather seedy. He nods, silently. Corridors . . . rooms . . . corridors. We are hurried along. At last, we are thrust into the maw of a huge hall, with benches along the walls and scorching heat around the red-hot iron stove. We undress hastily, and sit there naked, silently shivering in the burning atmosphere.

Behind a curtain, a rasping voice calls out numbers. The stove breathes fire. We crouch, glancing about at our neighbors. Some of them, tired of waiting, have commenced to dress again—so that they can quickly tear off their rags when they are called—in their underwear, long blue or grayish-white garments, from which unhealthy, hairless or shaggy, animal-like torsos lift themselves to this or that stupid, vacant or pallid face. Limp, brutish arms and simian hands dangle along the sides of these unknown living beings; claw-like, animal-feet with crippled toes crawl, as if severed, out of the miserable cotton underwear: and through unbuttoned, gaping slits, a thing apart, white in blackness, somehow dangerous-looking, gleams the naked sex. I glance at Ulrich, who has kept on his shirt and trousers, and see him tremble. "Man-mart!" I say, softly. "Animal-mart!" he answers, and his teeth chatter as in a fever. His neighbor to the left notices this, and laughs in a tinny voice. Others, astonished, turn their heads, like cows in their stalls, but the laugh dies in the general indifference. The voice behind the curtain rasps out numbers. In the foreground is Reinhard Birkmeier, blond-chested and manly. Time passes.

At last, some one steps from behind the curtain—some one with stars on his collar—and says: "Quick, now! Inside! One—two—three—four—five! You others, move up!" Five forms, entirely nude, stagger up and enter. After a minute, the door spews them forth again. All I see is faces ravished by the experience of moments. "All accepted!" one of them says. Meanwhile, the door has swallowed up five more, and has spewn them out again. Thus, on and on. We others move up, ever nearer the curtain. Birkmeier staggers out. Green of face, he nods, triumphantly. Thirty—twenty—ten creatures still crouch between us and the door.

Then, the scene is unexpectedly interrupted. Led by guards—male nurses in white jackets—six figures are brought in. The leader of the guards goes up to the uniformed person at the curtain: "For inspection—six slightly deranged inmates of the State insane asylum." "Wait!" He disappears into the next room. In the meantime, the nurses begin undressing their charges. The newcomers are silent, apparently overawed by their unaccustomed surroundings; and one of them, the man nearest me, a yellow-skinned creature with high cheek-bones and sunken, hunted eyes, looks about with jerky motions of his neck and rubs his brow again and again, as though but half awake and striving to rid himself of a nightmare. Three of the others, powerful men, gray in gray, with twitching features, lean forward without moving, staring at their knees. A fifth, emaciated and unusually tall, with sloping shoulders and lacking chest and forehead, looks furtively about and then, stepping up to the wall, proceeds to relieve Nature. One of the guards yanks him back. No one laughs. Only the sixth one snickers. He is a man of medium height, with red cheeks and the face of a merry child. He looks about him, to the right and to the left, inquisitive and happy, and continually points to this one and that one in the line. Suddenly, he spies Ulrich, who, with burning eyes, sits next to me; and the idiot bursts into choking laughter, slaps his thighs, gasps for breath, and is convulsed with impish hilarity. Then, the room is so quiet again that we can hear some one's teeth chatter. Ulrich, in a sudden attack of weakness, leans with closed eyes against the calcimined wall. Behind the curtain, in the next room, the voice rasps out numbers.

At this moment, the uniformed person once more becomes visible. "All in!" he says. The curtain swallows up nurses and patients. And now, we who remain behind, still waiting, are suddenly overcome with hysterical animation. Sitting there together on the hard benches, we all begin to wriggle about. Snickers, whispers, laughter flicker up on every side. The man with the fat belly turns and says: "Why don't they sell beer here?" He with the Adam's apple bleats without cause. The thin one repeats over and over to himself: "They take them all! They take them all!" And he with the flaming birthmark on his left thigh suddenly cackles like a hen. With that, the tension among the row of naked men seems broken. One of them has the gift of wiggling his ears; another can wrinkle his belly so that it resembles a face. The fat man laughs at this so uncontrollably that he begins to stink.

So the tedious interval of waiting would not have passed without some amusement . . . but suddenly, from the next room, behind the curtain, there arose a long-drawn shriek—a sound so horribly gruesome and nerve-racking that our childish happiness was shattered and we sat transfixed, frozen in our seats. The curtain flew aside and the ten guards, assisted by some military creatures, dragged, pulled, shoved and yanked away those six unfortunate maniacs, who were in the clutches of a biting, hitting, slavering, foaming, frenzied rage. Amid screams, wails and shrieks of pain, the brutal nightmare rolled into the corridor. Some one laughed horribly. A door slammed. We remained behind, ashen and rigid.

The voice at the curtain: "The next five!" . . . The thing continues . . . I—Ulrich. I see him snicker. I stagger, without cause. "Fit!" Clothes. Down the stairs. A courtyard—an officer reads long sentences from a sheet of paper. What does he say? ". . . For Emperor and Fatherland!"

repeats Ulrich Abel, at my side. To-morrow, then; to-morrow, at the railway station! Over a threshold—how nice to stroll along the street!

A light wind was blowing. Throughout the day, a melting, sticky snow had fallen. And now, it was already early evening. Silently, Ulrich stumbled along at my side—it did not occur to us to take the street-car. "To-morrow morning, at eight o'clock, at the railway station!" I said into the silence. He did not answer. Snow settled on his mustache, on his eyebrows—he did not seem to notice. His coat was open; the wind caught at it. In the house, we parted without a word. I reached my room unnoticed, sank into a chair, and remained there, my mind a blank—one hour, and another hour. Outside, night fell. I remained in the dark. Then, I got up, took my hat and coat, and went down the stairs. "To-morrow!" I thought. We had received no equipment. There were no uniforms; we were to get them later. "To-morrow!" I thought.

In the hallway I met the Gutjahr woman, her snow-wet hair pasted against her forehead. "Ruben has been missing since noon! We've all been looking for him. We must search the courtyard once more!" She reached for a shovel, which was standing behind the staircase. At that moment, Johannes Abel came down into the vestibule and waved to me. "Fall weather," he laughed, "or rather, winter weather!" And, slapping me on the shoulder: "Well, young hero! Your comrade is packing upstairs. Well, we wish you good luck! Isn't that so, Frau Gutjahr?" He was extraordinarily pleasant. But the woman did not answer him. She frowned into his laughing eyes. "Ruben ran away!" she said harshly. Abel grew uncomfortable. "Help look for him!" said the woman. They looked steadily into each other's eyes; then, he gave in and went to fetch a lantern. Ulrich returned with him and silently joined us. So the four of us went out into the snow-covered courtyard. We found him in a corner, next to the factory windows. There he sat in the snow, without moving. But when the light from the lantern penetrated the darkness about him, he turned his head toward us. We were still about twenty paces away from him, when he slowly arose and tried to run toward us; but he only swayed, a little snow-man, swayed nearer to us, extending a whitish object which he held in his hand. It was a piece of wrinkled, colored paper, unrecognizable and covered with snow. With a frozen, dreamy smile, he offered it to Ulrich. Ulrich took it, lifted the boy in his arms, and carried him into the house. Johannes Abel left us at the doorway, with a hasty good night. Frau Feuerbach came toward us. "There he is!" she cried, and kissed the boy. She laughed, while a few tears rolled down her cheeks. When, going up the stairs, we reached my door and I said good night, the woman bent close to my ear and laughed softly. "I am coming down to-night!" she whispered, and continued up the stairs to the landing where Ulrich was waiting for her, the now sleeping child in his arms. I closed the door behind me and stood for a long time motionless in my dark room, listening to the rapid beating of my heart.

Of this last night, I have to say only that the woman came and lay in my bed. The darkness of worlds separated my face from the face of the woman, so that her features were lost to me across the abyss. And then, it was another who writhed beneath me; and while I buried my lips into those of the woman, my racing blood cried out to another. Mirjam! Mirjam! On you, in you, I exhausted my weakness!

When she aroused me with gentle hands, a clouded sky hung, a murky gray, before the window. Fully dressed, she sat on the edge of my bed. "I am going!" she said. Her features were drawn with sleeplessness. The mature beauty of her body was clothed in a rather too bizarre, flowery negligee. The dry skin on her temples was yellowing. "I am going!" she repeated. I closed my eyes. "Good-by!" I said, and did not move until the door had closed softly behind her.

Half an hour later, Feuerbach knocked at the door. "It is time, comrade!" I joined him in the hallway. A gray stubble of beard covered his chin; he carried a black handbag, and his coat collar was turned up. "I left without saying good-by," he said, in a low voice. "I didn't want to wake anybody. My wife is still asleep. And Mirjam is still asleep. And the child is still asleep." A great bitterness clutched at my heart, and I felt ashamed. He continued, in an unsteady voice: "I suppose they will come to the station afterwards." We left. In the courtyard stood Gutjahr, dressed in his uniform. He joined us, grinning. "We are going the same way," he said, in a thick voice. He swayed and began to sing. I paused: "Let us get Ulrich!" There was no answer to my knocking at the outer door. Then, finally, the cook appeared, rumpled and ill-tempered. "Ulrich? I haven't seen him yet to-day. There is his door."

I knocked. Silence. "Ulrich!" Silence. Locked! . . . When Gutjahr thrust his bayonet into a crack to force open the door, a voice cried out in there, a strange voice cried out, a voice from another world cried out in there: "No! No! No! No!" And when, with Gutjahr, I threw my weight against the door, and as it began to crack and yield, the voice in there screeched: "Damn him who comes in here!"

The large room was in almost complete darkness, for the shutters were closed. I entered. Silence . . . darkness. Unconcerned, the cook in the kitchen rattled the dishes. Gutjahr went out to her, and across the corridor, through the open doors. I heard him ask for a cup of coffee. Feuerbach had remained outside, on the stairs.

The darkness of the room slowly changed to an unreal twilight, fed by a dim light that crept through the shutters.

I discerned the big bed. It was empty. I turned—no one. "Ulrich!" I said, softly. The silence stole over me. In the kitchen, the cook was talking.

Then, out of the mirror of the wardrobe, a face stared at me. Diagonally behind me, in a corner between the bed and the wall, doubled up and crouching like one seeking to hide, squatted a creature—the possessor of that face. I was paralyzed. I did not turn, but gazed into the eyes of that mirrored face. The creature was in his underdrawers, his upper body naked. When I moved, he whimpered: "Right away!" And again, in a hardly audible voice: "Right away!" I remained motionless.

Then—Gutjahr stumbles into the room and stamps up to the table. He lights the lamp. The darkness vanishes. There he stands, in his uniform, the light revealing his bloated features; he stands there, reeling, and chuckles at the naked creature. A sudden howl—a solitary, long-drawn howl: "Aaaah!" And when I finally tear myself around and start toward it, it raises its arm and sends a bullet through its mouth, into its brain. The creature that was Ulrich does not fall, but remains half upright, crouched between the bed and the wall. Destroyed, yet ludicrously arrogant, the thick mustache stands out from the white face.

We no longer had time to place him on his bed. "To the station!" Feuerbach and I ran. But Gutjahr, still affected by his drunkenness, lagged behind. He leaned against the wall of a house and waved his cap after us. "Shot himself!" he called, thickly. "Shot himself!" Then, he commenced to sing.

The railway station. People. The beating of drums! We were packed into cattle cars. The train did not leave at once. On the platform, many faces. Frau Gutjahr brought her son. He slumped down in a corner of our car, and went to sleep. A huge cart, drawn by two laborers, passed by slowly, and Samuel Klein distributed chocolate bars. He waved at us, stepped up to our car, and passed us a handful. "Abel Chocolate!" he shouted. "Victory Chocolate! Try it! It's good!" He drew himself up on tiptoe and smiled happily, yellow-toothed and hot, into my face. "Good, isn't it? Chocolate minus chocolate! Sugar minus sugar!" He winked his eye, and turned to the next car. "Young Birkmeier has been exempted! Indispensable!" he called back, once more. "They need him as a clerk in the War Ministry!"

The signal to start. More and more faces below, pressing closer and closer. Frau Feuerbach. Suddenly, Gutjahr's mother began to weep. Bursting forth through the callousness of years, violent sobs racked her frame. "Child!" she sobbed. "My child!" Gutjahr slept on. Her hair came loose and fell forward in gray strands over her eyes. The bony wretchedness of her body was convulsed by sobs. Frau Feuerbach led her away.

As the wheels were already moving, as we rolled out of the station into the snow-covered open, I leaned out once more and looked back. Far to the rear, amid the waving handkerchiefs, Mirjam had stepped onto the platform. But by now, the train was clattering away at full speed—ra-tat-tat, ra-tat-tat . . .

BOOK ONE

THE PLUNGE TO THE TOP

THE AFFLICTED

RA-TAT-TAT, ra-tat-tat . . . Were not these once more the native December winds whistling around the coach? Push yourself deeper into the stinking straw, brother! Sleep! But there, in a sterile meadow, already stands the first house—the outpost of familiar things, brightly lighted and aslant, it whirls by. Others lie yonder in the darkness of the fields. The yellow on the horizon has crept closer, and the black sky is flagged with circling suns and with flaming signs. Bridges thunder, metal clanks, until steel against steel screeches a halt . . . until the iron girders of the station leap at one through the window . . . until one staggers out of a confused half-sleep and lurches forward on tottering limbs, belched forth from the tunnel of the darkness, returning after eight black century-long years to the city of his childhood. After eight years of war, of prison-camps, of hunted vagabondage in a foreign land, I had come home again.

I had secured a Red Cross pass in Stockholm, and therefore would have had no trouble passing the inspectors at the gate. But it was nearly midnight, and through the high, cold, filthy windows the puddles of melted snow glistened on the asphalt. So I stepped into the station restaurant. It was a bare, barn-like, uncomfortable room. In one of the corners, like a red spook, an iron stove spat heat. Around it, sprawling over the tables, heads drooping, bowed over as if decapitated, were waiting travelers. In front of them, glasses of stale beer. And there, out of the depths of slack, open jaws, rolled a snore like a sound from Hades. Make room, brother! Brother, move over on your bench!

Sitting next to me, at my left, was a frail man in citified clothes, a high collar and a red, flowered tie. He had a small green wooden trunk under the bench before him and, in his half-sleep, he held it pressed between his legs. Occasionally, he would look up and stare into the beer glass, until, in the midst of his waking, the little, bird-like head would fall forward again, and his relaxed body would slump back against the yellow-gray wall. He was probably a traveling salesman. Next to him, a middle-aged woman, wrapped in a wide shag-coat, sat and sipped wine out of a tall, tapering goblet. She was a midwife, from the country. Next to her, red-faced and fast asleep, a farm wench lay sprawled across the table, exuding odors of the stable, of damp clothes, and of her coarse, firm body. Then, there were five or six others. Dark faces, faces of the night . . . fists stuffed in their pockets. One was talking in a loud and rasping voice to a dark-skinned woman. He mentioned the names of villages. She nodded. She might have come from any of them.

A tall, skinny person without an overcoat slid from behind a pillar and hastily seated himself in one of the chairs. But the tired-eyed waiter in the rust-stained apron had noticed him. He darted over and grasped him by the shoulder. "Pay what you owe from yesterday," he said, "or get out!" The skinny person started to talk, babbling in an extraordinary voice, with abrupt, jerky gestures of his slender, yellowish hands, on which were fingers like blind, wriggling salamanders. The words gushed forth from between twitching lips. The midwife looked up and laughed sluggishly. The waiter tried to pull the babbling man out of his chair. "The third night!" he puffed. "The third night! I can run after my money!" The traveling salesman started up out of his sleep and, red of face, angrily hammered the table with his fist, for no reason at all. The skinny person was suddenly gripped by a raving frenzy. He screeched; he foamed at the mouth; he seized the weary waiter by the lapels of his jacket, screaming insanely—screamed "Murderer! Murderer!" again and again, until the perplexed waiter, in astonishment, shook himself free. The midwife laughed thickly, rested her fleshy arms on the table, and twisted herself into a more comfortable position to watch what might follow.

Then, a broad-shouldered man came toward the table, with heavy, deliberate steps—a man at once powerful and too fat, with a neck like a bull, hair clipped close to the scalp, in dress and walk somehow giving the impression of a military man. The skinny person started, became silent, and glided away behind the pillars. "A detective!" the traveling salesman whispered. At that moment, the newcomer looked in my direction. "Anton!" I said. He eyed me, laughed shortly, and, with a motion of his head, indicated another table. We sat down. "I thought you had been hung and buried!" I said into the silence. It seemed as if he were trying to remember. "First, some wine," he said, and motioned to the waiter. Then, he nodded in the direction in which the skinny person had disappeared. "He beat it, the fool!" he said; and, slowly, as if he had almost forgotten how to talk and had to grope for his words, added: "Used to be an actor. Friend of mine!" "I thought you had been hung and buried!" I said into the silence. Slowly, the man looked up: "On account of Strij?" he asked, and, looking past me into the corner: "That was nothing!" "Pardoned?" I asked. Then, suddenly, he became ponderously talkative. They had broken jail—eighteen of them—after the Revolution. And since then, he had made himself valuable. He hesitated. Then, bluntly: "I've been assigned to the stations." With that, he broke off abruptly. I inquired after our former comrades, mentioning them by name. He nodded after each name and just said: "Dead!"—just said: "Dead!" Gutjahr? Yes, he was alive. "He is my friend!" he said. He wanted to know why I had remained in Russia so long—for four years after the war. Then, suddenly animated, he slapped me on the shoulder. "Come on!" he said. "Sleep at my place!" I hesitated. "A lot of them sleep there!" he said; and, after a pause: "It won't cost you anything. Not you!" We left.

At the station entrance stood two undersized lads, about sixteen and eighteen years old. Silently, they trotted along beside us. "Friends!" said Anton, "staying with me for the night." Silence. Then, one of them said: "Is it far yet?" There was no answer. We walked faster, without speaking. Now, I recognized the street. And the side-street was likewise familiar. Already, Anton had thrust the key into the lock of the wide outer door. "Here!" he said. "You didn't expect that, did you—that you would sleep here to-night!" We were already in the passageway and out in the courtyard; on the flagstones, the shadow of the rear-house lay like an immovable blackboard; raindrops glistened on the blind window-panes of the side-house. Up there, window beside window, window above window, sleeping rooms, chambers, specters of the nursery, stared at me out of dead eyes.

I stood silent . . . silent. I looked here and there. Bare, cold and hard, the ridge of the old roof was silhouetted against the murky sky. Something clutched at my heart and clamped itself around it like a closed fist.

Anton called to me. I think I staggered as I followed him. He had crossed over to the factory with the two lads. But the old workshop was now partitioned into small dwellings. Each one of these had an individual stairway leading through a casement into the courtyard. From a window, a boot cut out of tin hung on a pole in the air. The stairway next door led to Anton's place. Some one turned on the light.

We were in a low room, crowded with cots—six or seven of them, lined up close together. On four of them were shapes, muffled in horse-blankets, sleeping. The heavy odors of unwashed bodies settled on the lungs. The bare walls were marked with huge blotches of dampness. Anton, who had entered first, turned back to us. "Shut the door!" he said. "It's cold!" Climbing over two of the cots, he reached the far corner of the room, where another stairway, only a few steps high, led to the door of a smaller room. One of the two lads who had come with us—now, in the light, I saw that he was rouged—followed Anton with evident familiarity, twisting his hips effeminately. The other, a rosy-cheeked, countrified student in a technical school or a journeyman on his first trip, blinked timidly and hesitantly back toward the entrance. Anton and the rouged one motioned to him. He hesitated another moment; then, made up his mind and, heavy-booted, with clumsy steps, crossed the threshold and disappeared with Anton and the rouged one into the little room. I remained alone with the sleepers. The silence behind the closed door was broken by giggles.

Some one lifted his head from a cot and turned his face toward me. It was the ruddy, jovial, almost handsome face of a man with unmistakably Slavic eyes. "Lie down!" he said, under his breath. I stretched out on the cot next to his. "Where did he pick you up?" he asked. "At the station," I said. In a hardly audible voice, pointing toward Anton's room, he demanded: "Are you one of them?" Then, as I did not answer at once: "He usually brings only those under twenty." "And you fellows?" I asked. "We are lodgers here. He keeps only the little room." "Is he a detective?" I asked. The man laughed: "He's a stool! He has his palm greased by the State police!" He stopped abruptly.

The door of the little room opened and Anton came down the steps again, followed by the two. He and the rouged one had on greasy pajamas. The third, in his shirt-sleeves, ill at ease, sat down on the steps, while the others put a pan of raw meat on the stove and started the fire. A vigorous sizzling and the reek of frying suet arose. The Slav was sleeping again, or he pretended he was. One of the other muffled sleepers, awakened by the acrid stench arising from the stove, mumbled an indistinguishable curse. Anton, in good humor, said: "You can all fill your bellies! There's plenty of it." We waited.

Meanwhile, I must have fallen asleep, for, when some one poked me in the side and I started up, the scene in the room had changed. There stood the Slav, whom I had thought asleep on the cot next to me, wide awake, standing with the two others at the stove. He had a huge slab of fried meat in his fists and, with humorous exertions, tore off piece after piece with his teeth, all the while stepping from one foot to the other. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a very good-natured expression—almost too good-natured to be true. His jovial brightness might easily shift to sudden anger and nasty obstinacy. At the moment, he was in high spirits—a playful giant.

As to the others: the rouged one was not to be seen. The country boy in shirt-sleeves sat on the step. It was evident that he had not eaten for a long time; he was devoting himself with shy greed to the unexpected meal. His cheeks and forehead were flushed, and his shock of blond hair, now tousled and disheveled, made him appear still more boyish perhaps than he was. Anton had playfully buried his red hand in this shock of hair and, squatting on his haunches next to the boy, now put his arm about his shoulders and watched him with keen, smoldering agitation and strangely swimming eyes, that were not at all in correspondence with his broadly grinning countenance. This gaze, which seemed to me of almost indefinable menace, the boy surely must have sensed. Although he did not look up from his meal, remaining, in fact, half turned away, the nervous haste of his hands bore witness to his growing disturbance.

Some one else had arrived in the meanwhile. On the steps to the outside door sat the skinny person—the one without an overcoat—whom I had seen at the station. He had a piece of paper spread over his knees, and this served as table-cloth and plate; a slice of steaming fried meat was lying on it, and the man sat there and tore it, with ridiculous ceremoniousness, with his finger-tips, slowly carrying piece after piece to his mouth. His gaze was turned inward; he smiled, as if the smile were meant for himself; he nodded; he bowed slightly, as though sitting at a banquet table and conversing.

Still chewing, the Slav (whom they called Jablonski) began to sing some sort of slow, mournful Polish melody, but he broke off abruptly and, with laughing eyes, sat down on the cot beside me. "The belly is full, the song is sung," he said; "all that is lacking is a woman to crawl into bed with!" He nodded toward Anton, and a white tuft of hair, growing back from his forehead in the midst of his black, curly mop, gave him the momentary appearance of a too tall and too broad-shouldered clown. Anton removed his arm from the boy's shoulder, without a word. A few moments later, he rose slowly, stretched himself, and said to the lad: "Bedtime! We'll go inside."

The boy started and begged to be allowed to remain outside a little longer. "I'm not sleepy, yet!" he said, with a frightened smile. I got up, slowly crossed the room, and sat down beside him. With suppressed rage, Anton ceased his urging and leaned against the doorpost behind us. No one spoke. After a while, I said, softly: "You were born in Corinthia." The boy looked up, startled. "I can tell by your accent," I said. There was another silence. After a short pause, I heard, faintly: "It will soon be a month that I have been on my way. I am going to Bohemia, to become a glassblower. I have relatives there. But I must wait here for my visa." "And"—I indicated Anton—"him?" There was silence. "I have no money," came from the boy, still more faintly. The man behind us, becoming impatient, stooped and pulled the boy to his feet. "It is late!" he said with a forced laugh, and pushed him ahead into the little room. He turned around once more and tried to catch the eye of Jablonski, who turned away, whistling nonchalantly; then, he looked the sleepers over, looked at me, and looked at the skinny person, who was sitting on the steps near the entrance. "Wurmbrand!" he said. "You have been at the station again! The next time, I'll hand you over to the police!" With that, he left, and closed the door behind him.

The skinny person, however, had jumped up. Paper and meat fell down on the step beside him. He stood there, hands against his thighs, at military attention; he stood there nodding, accepting the reprimand, and only long after Anton had disappeared and the creaking of the bed and giggling once more were heard through the door, did he relax. He turned to me and said, with rounded and protesting gestures: "I cannot sleep! I walk about at night. Can any one prevent me from doing that?" As Jablonski, slowly and good-naturedly, started to laugh, the blood rose in his cheeks. "Sometimes he gives me something to eat, to be sure . . ." he protested, loudly. He sat down, spread paper and meat back on his sharp knees, and once more became oblivious of his surroundings. Jablonski laughed and nodded toward the skinny person. "He has either been drinking or sniffing again," he told me; and continued, in explanation, without lowering his voice: "He used to be an actor." Suddenly, he shouted over at him: "Where did you get the cocaine?" Wurmbrand twitched, but did not answer; without even raising his head, he kept on eating. Tears rolled from his eyes and splashed on the greasy paper.

Silence. It must have been about three o'clock, by now. Jablonski turned out the light. There was still a little glow in the stove—sufficient to preserve for us the vague outlines of furniture and individuals. We sat, the three of us, awake, without the slightest desire to sleep. Some one grumbled, babbling in his slumber. The Slav bent over him and listened intently. "He has something on his conscience!" he hissed. Then, he laughed: "He won't come across with it!" The sleeper turned over and mumbled a few more words. Then, silence again. From somewhere, there was a rustling; perhaps it was rats—I recalled having heard them here in the old factory one night as a boy. Silence. The stench of cold suet-grease came from the stove. The Slav leaned toward me. He pointed up to the little room. "He feeds us meat!" he whispered. "Every night!" "Where does he get it?" "He sells it, on the sly. Must have friends in the slaughter-house. But here, he makes a show with his meat. He gives it away"—and, after a pause—"although he himself does not touch it."

We sat in silence. Time passed. The place stank. I said: "I remember how, once, when I was in Uminsk, in the hospital barracks, they gave us meat that was already wormy. One of the nurses sold the fresh meat and gave us the rotten meat. She sold the good meat to a sporting-house. A man could get it there, if he had the price."

"Do you know Saratov?" Jablonski asked. I said: "I was married in Saratov—I lived there for two years, before I went to Odessa." He said: "Did you know that sporting-house on the Lenin Prospect?" "No, I didn't." "This house on the Lenin Prospect you would hardly know, because it was only for men with lots of money—it was not only first-class; it was first-class-plus. I was in this house every evening, in the reception room with the plush furniture and the gilt mirror, and when they tired of listening to the piano player, I would let my puppets dance. I made them myself. The men always liked to see them, and the girls! It was 'Jablonski!' here and 'Jablonski!' there, and 'Jablonski, darling, let the Polish bishop play with the farmer's daughter again!' You see, I come from Poland. And the Madam would say: 'Come back to-morrow night, brother! I will pay you a good fee every Saturday, or you can have your supper—always roasts and wine—or you can sleep with one of the girls, if you like!'

"I was there four months. Then, one night, when I came in, the woman said: 'Three new ones came in to-night.' I went up to the reception room. Two of the new girls were sitting there, a fat one and a very young one. I talked to them—they were Polish, from my country. Then, the third one came back from her room with a man. It was Manja—the girl from home, the girl I was engaged to marry . . ."

Perspiration stood on his forehead; he wiped it off with the back of his hand. "Manja! Yes! I said: 'Hello, Manja! Glad to see you!' She looked at me. Then, she screamed . . . screamed . . . turned pale . . . fainted . . ." He stopped, lost in his reflections. Silence. The sleepers breathed heavily. The skinny person had come over and sat next to Jablonski, nodding and twitching. Jablonski suddenly came to life. "Do you want to see her? Manja?" he said. "I made a puppet after her." He rummaged in a little trunk which he had shoved under his cot, and drew forth a puppet representing a nude woman. He also brought out a man-puppet, which he laid down beside her. With great skill, this one was fitted to the other in such a manner that the whole transaction of the exhibition could easily be divined even in the half-light of the pale glow from the stove.

The Pole stopped his play, and laughed. I laughed with him. The skinny person, in a sudden spasm of giggling, shook his head from side to side. I said: "That time in Uminsk, in the hospital—that nurse . . . She gave us worms to eat. We said: 'That deserves punishment!' But one of us said: 'Not punishment—we'll play a trick on her! We'll all go into her bedroom to-night!' All of us? No, we raffled for it. Three went. They went there at midnight. I lay close to the wall—heard the door close in there—heard the woman scream. She pounded the wall and screamed. She scratched at the plaster. The bed creaked. Then, silence . . . In the morning, none of the three was to be found. The woman hung herself." We were silent. Jablonski's head fell forward in a doze. He snored and awoke, startled, sitting stiffly erect.

From under a blanket came a scornful voice. The man must have been awake for some time. "That's a lot of bunk! Hospital whores—brothel whores. None of you ever had a swell lady!" I said: "I was swell myself, before the war. I studied Latin!" The man replied: "I was a collector. I got around everywhere. Gas collector. I used to have more money in my pocket than all of us together could eat up in a year. When I went to the women, the swell ones—'Good morning, Frau Hofrat!' or 'Frau Doktor!' or 'Frau Baronin'—and the way they looked at me, right away! They always knew what time I would be coming, and they always had layer-cakes for me, and roasts, and fish, and peaches. If it wasn't enough—'Good-by, sweetheart! Good-by, Frau Hofrat! Look for somebody else!' They gave me money; they gave me clothes—women like angels, like sugar dolls—ten, twenty of them—twenty in one day. If you don't pay, if you don't give—'Good-by, Frau Baronin! I spit on you!' That's the way to do it! The Princess Waldeck, Giselastrasse 62. Anybody who wants to look her up, can look her up.

Anybody who thinks I am lying can go there to-morrow and ask. And the maids! They often have firmer breasts and more solid behinds—"

He stopped abruptly. Jablonski laughed loudly and heartily, winked at me in perfect understanding, and slapped me on the thigh with his open hand. The skinny person had gotten up and had been tripping about; now, he stood in the center of the room, his face suffused with an exalted smile. With graceful, florid gestures, he recited unctuously: "In the dressing-rooms of the theater, one also has all sorts of piquant experiences. On one occasion, we gentlemen had bored a hole through the wooden partition, for use when a certain distinguished lady colleague changed her costume during the intermission. We would watch her every night when she undressed—outer robe, under robe, covering after covering, always more coverings—and Bassermann once said to me: 'Don't look, my dear colleague! She's peeling herself! She is an onion! When she has finished, there won't be anything left but a bad odor!' " He chuckled, his whole body shaken by his mirth. His hand with the salamander-fingers, wriggling in the air, motioned for silence, as if an unseen audience were applauding. He bowed. Jablonski, with humorous, good-natured sarcasm, stood opposite him and aped his gestures, his jerking and his tripping; and now that the raconteur was convulsed with laughter, the Slav's antics had developed into a regular dance—a dance with leaps and slides, gay and vulgar; a stumbling sort of dance, into which I found myself irresistibly drawn. And now the gas collector, the lady-killer, slid from beneath his blanket. He proved to be a little man with curled-up mustaches, a crippled war veteran in a shabby uniform, armless and with a wooden leg. He also danced and barked with hoarse laughter. Suddenly, Jablonski brought his fist down violently on the wooden frame of the cot and shouted: "Women!"

"Women!" we shouted. "Women! Women!" We shouted until we were tired out, and then we threw ourselves, hot, dizzy and breathless, on the cots. The armless one crawled back beneath his blanket. The next moment, he was asleep. There was silence.

The glow had died out in the stove. It must have been between four and five o'clock. Before the window hung the unrelieved night. Wind and showers of rain swept the courtyard. It had grown very cold. Even the rats no longer rustled in the corner. But presently—it could not have been more than half an hour since I had been laying quiet—a dim light appeared through the door cracks of the little room. Some one fumbled about. The bed creaked. Voices. One of them spoke persuasively, in a whisper. There were sounds of pulling and sliding. Could some one be resisting? Suddenly, torn from a tortured breast, a strangled, jagged scream. Scuffling. The door was thrown open. Into the room rushed, stumbling down the steps, a crazy silhouette in the dim light, half naked, clothes hastily snatched up under his arm—the boy, the boy from Corinthia. In mute flight, he leaped, climbed, tramped over the cots and, heavy-booted, made for the door, yanked it open, and disappeared.

In the frame of the lighted doorway stood Anton. Clad only in the coat of his pajamas, he stared after the fleeing boy out of swollen eyes beneath his low forehead. There he stood, bent forward, shaggy as a jungle beast, the long gorilla arm hanging limp at his side, the red paw awkwardly clenched. Behind him, in the light, among the pillows on the rumpled iron bed, nude and effeminately cross-legged, sat the rouged one. He was examining his nails, brazen and unruffled, and smiling conceitedly. With a furious gesture, Anton slammed the door. The picture was obliterated.

We slept. Then, the gray began creeping through the window and, shivering and half asleep, I was conscious of the coming and going of men. I pulled a blanket from one of the vacated cots over me and again slid apathetically into the chasm of insensibility. Push yourself deeper into the stinking straw, brother! Sleep! . . . Presently, I started up out of a heavy dream. I had been running up and down stairs; I had yanked open doors and slammed them shut again; I had raced through familiar rooms, the wall-paper of which I remembered from somewhere, from somewhere; but now they were bare, without people, without furniture, and the crumbled plaster of the ceiling was scattered over the neglected floor. Is not that moss growing in the cracks? Go upstairs, something said; the iron door to the attic is open—the door behind which Ulrich shot himself. Shot himself? There is a crib which stands overturned on a trunk! Search, search! Up and down stairs, opening doors, through ghostly rooms—when, presently, I started up out of a heavy dream, a cloudy day lay over the cold drabness of my lodging place. I was alone in the room.

I arose and crossed over to Anton's door. I knocked—there was no movement. I opened it and entered. The tiny square was almost entirely taken up by a white enameled iron bed, upon which dirty bed-clothes and bolsters were thrown about in a slovenly fashion. Brown blotches—bed-bug marks, in all likelihood—stood close above it on the wall-paper. A military picture hung under glass in a frame, a colored print with many uniforms—a meeting of emperors, or something of the kind. To right and left of it, cut out of an illustrated periodical and fastened to the wall with thumb-tacks, were two still-life prints: one depicting a bouquet of flowers in a gay-colored vase; the other, a cloth on which lay a melon and various other fruits. On the narrow table before the window facing the court were several books, spotted and thumbed—a volume of marching songs, a novel, a manual of seed-planting. I opened the drawer; in it rolled a knife.

There was one other chair in the room—nothing more. A heavy, benumbing, bestially menacing air hung over it all. I left the room and stepped out into the court.

Rain fell. There was not a person to be seen. I put up my collar, crossed the courtyard, and entered the archway. This, at least, was unchanged—only dirtier and more dilapidated than it had been before. There was now a board on which the tenants were listed. I read, but none of the names were familiar. Abel, Birkmeier, Feuerbach—they were not to be found. Apparently, the apartments had been divided into smaller ones and rented to a lower class of people, for there were thirty-four names on the board. I went back into the courtyard, and once more gazed up at the side house. At the windows up there hung ludicrously gaudy-colored curtains; flower-pots, empty and drab, mourned on the sills, and against one of the panes—was not that the room where grandmother had slept?—a pale, straw-blond child flattened its nose. I shivered.

Jablonski laid his hand on my shoulder. Beside him stood a tall, raw-boned man, with sober eyes beneath bushy eyebrows. He wore an old service uniform. "This is the new one," the Pole said to him; and to me, he explained: "This is Badele." The tall man asked: "You have just come from Russia?" "Yes." "Are you of the Party?" "No," said I. His face went blank; he nodded, and went away across the courtyard. "He, too, lives over there in the rat-holes," said Jablonski. "I am going into a few saloons with my puppets. Would you like to come along?" "No." He asked: "Are you going to look for work?" "No," said I. He shrugged his shoulders, and left.

Behind the window-panes, behind *the* window-panes, a pale, straw-blond child flattened its nose. I waved. It smiled. I waved again. Now, it drew back, with a shy look, and disappeared. Oh! I shivered. I crossed the courtyard again, descended the stairs, threw myself on a cot, and slept . . .

THERE is still much to tell. Many things took place between day and night, between waking and sleeping. There were dull, languid hours that one idled away, silent or chattering, crouched beneath the horse-blankets. There were hours when laughter fluttered. There were others, bestial hours, when the naked body writhed unrestrained, unconscious of all but its own lustful passions. There was wine in jugs and wine in an old tin can that reeled from mouth to mouth, while one sang at the top of one's voice, until one fell back heavily in a death-dark sleep.

And there were faces. That of Anton. Faces of rouged boys, with eyes dripping mascara. And others, terror-stricken, stunned by the experience. The Slav would laugh. Badele would knit his brows. "What of your parents?" he once asked me. Who knows! Dead and buried, or perhaps emigrated! Lonely is your heart; careless is your heart. No one cares for you, and you care for no one. Push yourself deeper into the stinking straw, brother! Sleep! . . .

There was a smooth face you once knew. It was still the same; only, more plump. Gutjahr! It was at night, at the corner, that I met him again. We both happened to turn at the leather-goods store into the side-street. I walked with him along the board fence. "Back again!" he laughed. We ducked into the shadows of the houses and walked swiftly on, panting. "Meet me to-morrow noon in the little café at the bridge!" The others had disappeared, here and there, into houses and side-streets. We walked on. Suddenly, Gutjahr jerked me aside into the darkness. We crouched low. Four policemen hastened by, with clattering sabers. Gutjahr laughed softly. "I'll see you to-morrow!" he said, and was gone.

I found the little coffee-house with the greasy marble-topped tables. Gutjahr, his hat on the back of his head, was sitting among silent companions. "No business to-day!"

he said, in a low voice. He was dressed in an extremely tight-fitting black suit, and I saw that his whole body had become plumper. "I am going to my mother's. Come along!" A cripple swayed from table to table, offering matches for sale in a nasal voice. We started on our way.

Frau Gutjahr now lived in the rear-house of the old place; I had not found her name on the board because she merely rented a furnished room. We had several more drinks on the way, and by the time we had plowed up the stinking stairway and entered her room, we were in high spirits. That did not disturb her; she bade us move our chairs up close to her. She lay on a cot before the window, and told at great length, and with disgusting details, how she had been paralyzed for the last three years. On the window-sill beside her stood plates and bowls of stale food. These she pulled over to her, smelled at them, poked around in them, and carefully selected morsels of food. She began to eat, noisily, plunging her bony fingers into the putrefying mess and pushing the leavings back onto the window-sill. She had become very aged, and was horribly withered.

While she gulped down the swill, she talked incessantly. "Klein? Birkmeier? They have villas. They are rolling in fat. Ride around in automobiles. Nothing but the best, day and night. The Jew keeps four women—beside his sister, whom he's always slept with. His daughter? Maybe he sleeps with her, too. She's the worst whore of them all!" She paused, bent forward, and stared down into the court with her round vulture eyes. Then, with fluttering gestures, she motioned her son and me to come closer. "The Meier woman!" she hissed. "She has a baby farm, and makes angels of them. What has she in that bundle? Bringing a new one! That's sixteen she has now! None of them lasts more than four months. Feeds them opium! Anybody else would be in jail! But when you take over the bastards of the high officials—!"

She nodded and smiled down into the court, for the plump, cheerful-looking, rosy-cheeked woman had waved a greeting up to her. "Frau Meier," she called down, "how are you? Always busy with the dear little babies!" The plump one, without answering, hissed back: "News! I'm coming up!" "Fine! Fine!" "In a few minutes!" They both snickered, and the woman below went into the side-house.

"Oh, yes!" said Frau Gutjahr, turning toward us her face, now blotched with red. "What was I talking about? Birkmeier! Lives on Wagnerallee. Money no object. But he still sells his daughter. She used to sleep with Abel, you know—that is how he got to be general manager. Abel is through with her, now. And Birkmeier doesn't really have to do that, any more." Gutjahr rose sluggishly, took a large key from the wall, and went into the hallway. The door had hardly closed behind him, when the old woman nodded in his direction, and hissed: "Him! Him! He was mess-sergeant. You know what that means! Now, he buys foreign currency. Always makes money. But he leaves his mother here to rot, the lousy bum!"

In a moment, Gutjahr was back again, and behind him entered two women: the Meier woman, the professional "foster-mother," and another woman, about forty-five years of age, with gold teeth glistening between parted lips and an offensively large, reddish-brown transformation above her brow. Fräulein Calé was her name. Gutjahr and I seated ourselves in a corner, behind a table on which we could rest our elbows, for our heads were heavy. Meanwhile, around the invalid, an affected, beaming, intimate cordiality developed among the three women. Fräulein Calé started it off by pulling her heavily perfumed silken kimono closer about her and declaring, with a glance in my direction, that this was no way to go visiting. "Don't mind him!" old Frau Gutjahr replied. "I knew him when he still messed his diapers." Frau Meier chuckled deliberately, and Fräulein Calé sent me an inflammatory glance. "Fräulein Calé lives on the second floor in the front-house," explained Frau Gutjahr, who was now speaking in an affected, self-conscious German, and exchanged a look with Frau Meier. "She lives in Abel's old apartment." "I do not live alone," smiled the gold teeth. "Several young ladies live with me." She handed me a tiny card—and a look. Frau Meier chuckled significantly, but said nothing. The red-headed one, offended, pressed her lips together and moved restlessly in her chair. Frau Gutjahr, ever the perfect hostess, changed the subject: "I hear you are getting a second entrance—from the courtyard into the rear rooms?" Fräulein Calé settled back in her chair. "So Herr Abel has promised me," she said, casually. "Only wooden stairs, but they'll be good-looking." Frau Gutjahr raised herself a little. "Then, the landlord has been up to see you?" "The day before yesterday." The Gutjahr woman sat up, with a glance at Frau Meier: "It's news to me that Abel was in the house." The gold teeth smiled: "It was late. But, being the landlord, it is his privilege to come to see me at any time of the day . . ." "Of the day?" Frau Meier laughed derisively. The gold teeth were sheathed behind tight lips, and the red-head exchanged a look with Frau Gutjahr. Then, she said: "At any time of the day—or night! I don't take in suckling infants . . ."—Frau Meier stopped laughing—"and, furthermore, my lodgers remain alive!" concluded Fräulein Calé.

There was a sultry silence. Gutjahr had got over part of his drowsiness, and now exhibited some interest in the women's conversation. He poked me in the ribs, and, winking his eye, said: "Remain alive? What do you mean?" His mother commenced egging them on: "The young lady means, it is far more decent to run a manicure salon—" She broke off. The Meier woman, getting up, demanded: "More decent than *what?*" She stood, aggressive, leaning on the back of her chair. The red-head, emboldened by this apparent support, turned to her and snickered mockingly. The blood rose in the fat woman's face. "My foster-children—" she said, with difficulty. With puckered lips and a short laugh, Fräulein Calé broke in: "Who is talking of your foster-children?"

The paralyzed woman had settled herself in a comfortable position, and her eyes, slightly bloodshot, passed from one to the other. She was silent. But the scene was not moving fast enough for her son. "Who is talking about foster-children?" he said, loudly; then, more slowly, and with emphasis: "Everybody knows that the little bastards croak at your place!" "Everybody knows that!" I corroborated him, crashing my fist on the table. The wine rose to my head again. The veins stood out on the Meier woman's forehead, but she said nothing. That gave the red-head assurance. Attacking anew, deceitfully friendly, maliciously casual, she asked: "How is your son?" Frau Meier replied, very quietly: "Don't speak of him! You're too common!" The gold teeth glistened. Frau Gutjahr batted her eyes from one to the other. Fräulein Calé, turning to me, explained, without lowering her voice: "Herr Meier arranges—er—meetings! Every evening, he has visitors. Gentlemen visitors! Gentlemen friends!" Controlling herself with difficulty, Frau Meier said: "You could never understand why those men come together. You haven't the brains!" The gold teeth glistened again. Frau Gutjahr still batted her eyes from one to the other. There was a pause. The atmosphere grew less tense. Gutjahr and I were sleepy. But that old harpy, Frau Gutjahr, had tasted blood. She turned to the fat woman—Frau Meier—grinned nastily, and began to hum the refrain of the song "Queer Oscar." At this, Frau Meier finally lost control of herself. "You, Frau Gutjahr!" she bellowed.

"You have reason to talk!" She threw a quick glance at Gutjahr and, when she saw that he paid no attention, she whispered: "How is your daughter-in-law?" Frau Gutjahr, with rapidly blinking eyes, demanded: "Daughter-in-law?" "Anton!" The Meier woman laughed noisily. The red-head snickered and hissed into my ear: "She means that Anton who has a room in the basement. Gutjahr is living with him!" She winked knowingly.

The lame woman, without uttering a sound, made a lunge for one of the bowls on the window-sill and hurled it at Frau Meier. Splashes of moldy marmalade stuck on the fat woman's cheek and dress. She grew pale and screamed: "Sow! Sows! Now, they are friends!" And, to the red-head: "Do you know what this Gutjahr woman said about you yesterday?" A second bowl flew through the air and shattered on the wall near Frau Meier, leaving behind brown traces of foul-smelling gravy. Without taking the slightest heed of her peril, the assaulted woman continued: "Do you know what she said? She said that you caught a disease twice last year. That you were put in jail for a month, because somebody reported you for stealing money out of his coat-pocket. That there are more bugs in the beds of your trollops—" A third bowl flew across the room, but missed its mark. Soup dripped from the silken kimono. The red-head, now a vicious harridan, leaned forward, close to the paralytic's face, and spat out the words like a cat: "Did you say that?" Without a word, the bed-ridden woman struck her over the head with the bamboo handle of a paper fan, so violently that it broke. The red-head clawed at the breasts of the sick woman, who cried out shrilly. Frau Meier hastened up behind the two, seized them by the hair, and cracked their heads together. She shrieked with laughter; then, she stumbled and fell, and the red-head, screaming, furiously pounded her on the back with the high heels of her shoes. The silk kimono fell open, revealing the flabby body bulging beneath it in a brown union-suit.

In the meantime, Gutjahr had come out of his stupor and was dragging his body from behind the table. I was chained to my chair by the effects of the wine, and could do nothing but laugh, and hammer on the table, and laugh again; but a roaring, drunken rage had taken possession of him. He threw himself, kicking and punching, among the women. That sobered them. Not another word was uttered. Frau Meier left first. Fräulein Calé rose slowly and arranged her hair and kimono before the mirror; then, she stepped up to me, and her gold teeth glistened close to my face. When she was gone, there was a second tiny card before me on the table. Panting, with closed eyes, Frau Gutjahr lay stretched out on the bed, snickering. We left hasily.

As we tramped down the stairs in the half-darkness, a woman stepped aside to let us pass. I saw her face, for a moment. I knew that woman. Half turned away from us, she pressed herself into a corner. I went on, hesitated, and turned. She was already hastening up the stairs, and disappeared into Frau Gutjahr's room. It was Frau Feuerbach. I wanted to follow her, but Gutjahr was calling me clamorously. I joined him, and dismissed the incident from my mind.

When, some hours later, I went into the basement to get something out of my trunk, which I had shoved under a cot, I heard a furious discussion going on behind the closed door of the little room. Some one was pleading, begging humbly, and at the same time, whining eagerly, like a dog, so beside himself with agitation that several minutes passed before I recognized Anton's voice. He was protesting his love and babbling in insane jealousy. Then, some one moved, and a voice—Gutjahr! Yes, Gutjahr's voice!—calmly, crisply demanded money. A profusion of protestations was the other's answer; he had none. Then, the scraping of a chair. I slipped out into the courtyard. A few moments later, Gutjahr passed, without noticing me. He was smiling.

That night, there was no sign of Anton. He came in toward morning, pale and silent. He had some one tie up a wound on his left thigh. It looked like the bite of a large animal.

MANY similar incidents occurred during the time I passed in that place. For, as far as I was concerned, I just stayed on. Whether I slept; whether I slunk through the adjacent streets, filled with the noises peculiar to the quarters of the poor; whether I extended my pilgrimages to the busy streets of the city proper—it was, after all, merely a circle which I traversed, always leading me back into the old house and my dingy cot. It became my habit to loiter around the entrances to the theaters and fashionable restaurants at night, watching the people come and go; and I took a malicious delight in moving in the midst of this well-dressed throng, and rubbing my old service uniform up against these bodies covered with furs and silks, with whom I had nothing, nothing, nothing in common. Once, I was arrested as a pickpocket. They found nothing on me. One day was like the other. There is little to serve as milestones to the memory.

Oh, yes—one thing remains. It was early in spring; an unusually mild afternoon, and a bleak sun hung over the old house-tops. Jablonski was sitting in the courtyard and, for his own amusement, exhibiting before a horde of children a Punchinello, who fell into all kinds of misfortune—a performance which, by its gay simplicity, chiefly attracted the youngest children, who crowded about, a tiny, dirty, ragged, snot-nosed, blissfully shrieking mob. Insatiable and grateful, they pressed around the Slav crouching on his little trunk, who constantly endeavored, through his constant prattling and the crude distortions of the puppet, to create new twists to the game. In the front row, his back to me, a grown-up person stood among these laughing youngsters. Or rather, some one resembling a grown-up person. Having just come up, I was standing behind him, and therefore could not see his face. Black hair, curled in an unusual manner, fell to his shoulders. It was a touching yet amusing—yes, gladdening—sight to see this slender person among the children, shaken by laughter the same as they, shrieking as they did at every unexpected twist, shouting with glee in the shrill, care-free voice of a boy and throwing his hands into the air. I noticed that not mine alone, but also Jablonski's attention was attracted more and more by the actions of this youth, until the point was reached when he no longer played for the benefit of the children, but only that he might look upon his strange joy.

I started to push through the ever-increasing crowd of children in order to see the face of this singular person, when I noticed Anton standing in the doorway, watching the scene. With an indescribable look of unbridled emotion in his wild eyes, gaping like a sucking abyss, he stared at the laughing youth. The tall boy became ill at ease, as if he felt the weight of that fixed stare. His shoulders twitched; his laugh became forced, grew fainter, and died away. Anton, his head bent forward, had begun to walk toward him, with slightly swaying steps. Something seemed to urge me on; I also pushed closer. Anton, now behind the young man, bent over his shoulder and spoke in an undertone. I saw the youth start, but he did not turn; he merely stood and listened. Anton bent closer to his ear.

At this moment, a voice, almost breaking in its intensity, called from the entrance of the courtyard: "Ruben!" And again: "Ruben!" The slender youth turned around. I looked into a boy's face: the face of Ruben Feuerbach. Out of unchanged eyes, out of his large, sincere, bright, melancholy child's eyes, he looked at me. "Ruben!" I said, softly. He left Anton's side without a word, came to me, beaming with glad recognition, and gave me his hand, as if we had parted only yesterday. He held my coarse man's fist between his pale, slim fingers and led me across the courtyard to a little, skinny, bespectacled, big-nosed, old-young man—Ignaz Klein—who took hardly any heed of me, but said fiercely to Ruben: "Anton! What does he want of you?" Ruben smiled, but did not answer. When the other continued questioning him, he placed his hand on the excited man's arm and smiled at him from innocent eyes. Ignaz quieted down and ceased his queries. I also stood silent, left without words; and suddenly I was aware of the clumsy bones that the rough cloth of my uniform clad, and hid my hands behind my back. Now that the smile had left his face, there lay on Ruben's noble brow and in his pure, shadowy eyes the same expression of illusive melancholy that I remembered from a deeply buried past. He talked, in a few simple words, of the Pole's Punchinello. I hardly answered. He had grown taller, but not older; it was as if the years had brushed by him without touching him. "Ruben! . . ." I began, softly. I would have liked to know this thing or that—but I did not ask. He smiled into my eyes.

And Ignaz Klein—he was staring, lynx-eyed and watchful, at Anton, who had been joined by Gutjahr. The two stood there for a time, as if undecided what to do; then, they slowly walked away. Only after they had disappeared from sight, did Klein turn to me. He had grown into a man in the image of his father, ugly and short-sighted; but in the staring eyes behind his round lenses lurked the flame of some hidden conviction, some spiritualized passion. "What of your father?" I asked. "We have nothing in common!" he replied, fiercely. I inquired no further. He explained in a few words that he and Ruben were on their way to attend a meeting. "At the house of Rafael Meier, the occultist. I want to introduce Ruben to him." "Meier?" I thought of the conversation at Frau Gutjahr's. Klein pointed. "He lives here, in the side-house."

Even as we looked, some one opened a window. A large, blond-bearded man appeared in the frame, saw us, waved his hand, disappeared and, after a moment, came into the courtyard. He had clear, almost luminous eyes beneath a broad but not exactly intellectual brow. He took Klein's hand in both of his and greeted him in a resonant voice; then, he turned and looked at Ruben and me. He stepped up to the boy. "Is this the one of whom you spoke, Ignaz?" he asked. And to Ruben, after a long gaze: "You are welcome!" And, turning abruptly to me: "You also are welcome!" He went ahead, and I, together with the others, followed his inviting gesture without further thought. I stared at his back—the broad, slightly stooped back of a man old before his years. He wore a greenish, rain-proofed suit, buttoned at the throat, and he wore coarse walking shoes with worn heels on his large feet.

The way led over a side staircase, which was new to me, set in the corner between rear-house and side-house—in order to afford new entrances to the many additional apartments, the wall between the two houses had been broken through and the hallways, at different levels, were connected by stairs. Rafael Meier conducted us to a door, behind which could be heard the thin whimpering of baby voices. He knocked, but did not enter and bade us wait. The whimpering grew fainter and presently died out; whereupon, we were allowed to enter. We passed through a kitchen and, turning to the right—to the left, behind a glass door, the tiny voices rang—we found ourselves in a low but very wide room. It was sparsely furnished. Except for a number of plain chairs standing along the walls of the room, it contained only a sofa, covered with black, cracked oilcloth—undoubtedly used by night as a sleeping couch—a medium-sized, cheap bookcase, that looked somehow purposeless and out of place, and a rickety old table without a cover, which was pushed before the solitary window. The window was hidden by dark curtains.

The three of us sat on the sofa, Ruben between Klein and myself, while Meier, pushing aside the curtains, looked out of the window. "I'll have to be on the watch," he said, his back to us. "My guests won't be able to find their way over the stairs." We remained silent. Presently, the man hastily threw open the window, bowed to some one in the court, and called: "I'll come down!" He left us, and soon returned in the company of two women, one of whom, a heavy-set, aging blonde, overdressed in costly attire, seemed to be laboring under some suppressed excitement, for she hardly nodded to us when we were introduced. Her name was Band—Luise Band. She promptly seated herself on a chair and, addressing Rafael Meier, continued a report that she had obviously begun on the stairs. A certain "he"—it was plain that she designated her husband—this "he," it appeared, after a minutely described and, to us, inexplicable controversy, had arbitrarily forbidden her to have anything more to do with this occult science. A woman's place, he maintained, was in her home. "I told him emphatically," she reported, "that he had nothing to say about it. The money we have comes from my dowry. The house, the furniture, everything—he has no right to say anything! What has he ever done for me, in the sixteen years we have been married?" By this time, she was speaking in a very loud voice, and it was easily seen that she was on the verge of casting aside all restraint and modesty. Meier, therefore, raised a placating hand. But Frau Band, the further excited by this gesture, almost screamed: “He has no right to forbid me anything! Am I not right?”

At this point, the other woman, an elderly, insignificant lady, with thin, white hair parted above her smooth, narrow face—Fräulein Kurila by name—thrust herself into the conversation. She brushed her lean, bony fingers across her brow and temple, and said, simply: “You are right. There must be no forbidding. You alone are the arbiter of right and wrong. But it was not wise of you to lose your temper. What says our Master? ‘Victory without force!’ Your husband could have been convinced.” “Convinced!” shrieked the other. But she stopped abruptly when she saw that Meier was silently nodding agreement. She shoved back her chair, still angry, but silenced.

And now the old spinster turned to us and scrutinized us, one after another. Meier had gone back to the window. For Ignaz Klein, whom she knew, she had only a nod. It was Ruben into whose eyes she looked, long and solemnly. He returned her scrutiny in a composed and melancholy manner; then, unexpectedly, he turned his gaze to the wall and lost himself in a beautiful, foolish smile. She said nothing. Then, I felt her eyes on my face. I observed that she gave a slight start. She brushed her hand over her temple, and said, cautiously: “Have you come into our circle for the first time?” I did not answer. Then, she said, very gently—and it seemed to me as if her voice quivered with a fear which she tried hard to suppress: “We should be brothers—all of us!” What was it she read on my brow? I remained silent. No one else spoke. From somewhere, the wailing of the thin, infant voices came faintly into the brooding silence—a sound, joyless, droning, insistent, yet somehow without hope, like the hum of flies struggling against a window-pane.

Rafael Meier turned away from the window. "It has grown dark," he said. "Let us begin!" Some one knocked at the door, and the skinny person entered—the man from the station; the man without an overcoat, whom I had not seen since that first night. "Wurmbrand," said Meier, as he shook him by the hand, "where have you been?" The skinny person was engaged in ceremoniously greeting the two women. "I was hit by an automobile," he said. "I was in the hospital." And he added, smilingly: "Not the worst kind of winter quarters!" He greeted Ignaz, and was introduced to Ruben. When he stood before me and recognized me, he became alarmed. He pulled me aside and spoke to me insistently in a confused French; I gathered that he begged me not to mention any particulars of our acquaintance; above all, none of the events which I had witnessed in the lodging-place.

Meanwhile, Rafael Meier had pushed the table in front of the sofa. Fräulein Kurila, Wurmbrand and I pulled up some chairs and sat down. Frau Band placed her chair somewhat apart from ours, in the center of the room; and Meier reclined opposite her, next to us, against the wall. Ruben smiled attentively. Ignaz Klein leaned forward, all eyes, and stared fixedly at the isolated woman. There was a moment of absolute silence. Then, Meier said, very slowly: "We have begun!"

For some time, nothing happened, except that Frau Band's flickering eyes gradually grew quiet. She lowered her lids and breathed audibly. "Are you asleep?" asked Meier. Then, as he did not receive an answer: "Is some one with you?" Still, there was no reply. Meier, again, more urgently: "Who is there?" Silence. The head of the woman swayed as if in half-sleep or drunkenness. Meier turned to us and said, softly: "I have no contact! Some one else must ask her!" Now, Ignaz Klein got up from his chair, very excited, and said, in a changed, loud voice, in the manner of Rafael Meier: "Departed spirit, or whomever you may be! Will you give answer?" Frau Band's head swayed unsteadily; one could take it for an affirmative, if one so desired.

Klein was now certain of success. He said—and he said it in a resounding voice, with flaming cheeks, in a steadily mounting fever of excitement—yes, to this invisible Something supposedly in the room, he said that we were a group of seekers, of newly awakened disciples. He cried: "Therefore, we have called you, and question you. We, who are servants to the Spirit—shall we see its reign? We, who are servants to Love—shall we see its reign? We, who are servants to Freedom—shall we see its reign?" He stopped and leaned forward, breathing heavily and supporting himself on the edge of the table. Fräulein Kurila had accompanied Ignaz Klein's speech with a quiet smile, nodding in satisfaction. Meier stood leaning against the wall with closed eyes. There was not a sound, except the whimpering baby voices from the other room. The bespectacled one said again: "Answer!" Then, suddenly grown very pale, he sat down. Every eye was on the woman in the middle of the room.

Frau Band sat there, listless. Her head swayed. Her lips did not move. "Answer!" Rafael Meier now said. There was no result. Then, Meier called cautiously: "Frau Band!" She started up and looked about her in confusion. "Failure!" said Klein. "Nothing!" The woman rose and crossed slowly, reeling a little, to Fräulein Kurila, and sat down beside her. There was a long silence. Even the whimpering in the next room seemed to have grown fainter.

At this moment, I happened to glance at Wurmbrand; and so I witnessed from the very beginning the episode that now took place. Wurmbrand, as he was wont to do, had just then turned his head from side to side in nervous courtesy, when suddenly his body, his features, his gestures froze. He stared into a corner. Then, he raised his long arm heavily and pointed beyond us. "There!" he stammered.

We swung around and looked toward the corner diagonally behind us to the right. I neglected to mention that, before the séance began, Meier had closed the curtains and fetched a lighted kerosene lamp from the kitchen, which he had placed on the table. The lamp etched a narrow circle of light around the table, sharp, clear, bright. Beyond this, the room was almost in darkness. Naturally, this corner was also in an uncertain semi-darkness.

There sat Ruben. Surprised, I glanced toward his place on the sofa. It was empty. While we were absorbed in the scene centering around Frau Band, Ruben must have risen softly and crossed over to the corner. There he sat now, stiffly erect, on a chair. His long, black curls had fallen forward in a wild and threatening manner, completely framing his chalky face. A thin, straight strand of hair fell vertically across his forehead and eyebrow and down along his cheek, appearing in the unreal light like a bloodless, gaping wound. His eyelids were lowered, but through a narrow slit shimmered a line of white. His lips were parted, and they trembled.

I moved to jump up, but felt myself pulled back into the chair. "Trance!" whispered Ignaz. His eyes gleamed. We sat in silence, torn between horror and intense excitement. Fräulein Kurila repeatedly urged Meier, with insistent gestures. The man drew away from the wall and stood pale, his arms hanging slack to his sides. "Who are you?" he asked, tonelessly.

Ruben's lips began to move . . . no, not Ruben's lips! Behind the deathly white, glass-like mask of the boy, there moved the lips of some one else—of an old man—a man of the crowd. A voice rattled in some one's throat. A voice said slowly: "Ackermann . . . Acker . . . mann . . ." Then, after a while: "Commission agent . . . Oranges . . . Trieste . . ." Then, absolute silence. Ruben sat motionless. Only his hands trembled. Meier asked, with difficulty: "Are you dead?" "Dead . . ." it responded, after a time. "Since when?" "This morning . . ." There was a pause. We hardly breathed.

The rattling grew louder: "One . . . is here." Meier wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "Who?" he asked, in his toneless voice. We looked at one another, but sat pale, silent . . . silenced. Fräulein Kurila, through a gesture, came to an understanding with Meier. Then, she said: "Do you announce another?" "Another . . ." the voice rattled. We waited. Ruben's face had become more animated. It twitched as with suppressed suffering. The lips closed, pressed into a bloodless line.

The old spinster rose, and only now that she was standing did I notice how shaken she was. Her legs refused to support her; she held herself erect between the table and the chair. She nodded—nodded like a woman a century old—toward the corner. "Speak for him!" she said. "Speak!" And once more—timidly, now: "Speak for him!" Ruben's face twitched convulsively, as if in silent struggle against the inconceivable. His lips were torn apart, as though invisible claws were pulling them, now here, now there, back from his teeth. The teeth showed white, in a threatening snarl. The voice, suddenly breaking forth, rattled and rattled, the words pursuing each other: "The cats! The cats are starving to death! They are locked in the bedroom, and are starving to death! . . . She was knocked down by a beer wagon . . . She was run over . . . They don't know who she is . . . The cats are locked in! Starving! Starving! . . ." The rattling sank into a moan, and died away. Tears were running down Fräulein Kurila's face. She raised herself a little, and asked:

"When? When?" "October," the voice came back, slowly and very low. "Oct-ober . . . Oct-ober . . . Eighteen-hundred . . . fif-ty-nine!" The voice died out. We stared silently, with suspended breath, into the corner.

It seemed as if, in a way, Ruben's body had crumpled, though he still sat upright, without support. From the next room, the voices droned, wailed, droned. Ignaz Klein was leaning back, with closed eyes. The skinny person and the Band woman sat outside the circle of light. Meier, his features slack, wiped the perspiration from his brow. As for myself, the whole performance then seemed to me unreal, remote, and somehow frivolous. "You have seen many things," I said to myself. "Both drunk and sober, you have seen many things in the last eight years. And now, you also see this!" There was a dead silence in the room.

Meier was the first to pull himself together. "Are you still with us?" he asked. There was no answer. Again: "I am asking you if you are still in our midst?" Ruben sat rigid. The throat rattled: "Ackermann. From . . . Trieste." Meier asked: "Is some one with you?" I don't know what impelled me to do it, but I picked up the lamp and stepped closer to Ruben. I saw his frozen face unexpectedly thaw into a smile. But his features did not thereby become milder or more forgiving. The almost magical beauty of his brow, his eyes, his nose—indeed, of every particular of his face—stood in an incomprehensibly strange, terribly disturbing contrast to the broad, knowing, lecherous grin that spread over his countenance, like a repulsive muck. The others also observed this change. They gathered to right and left of me, watching breathlessly. "Who . . ." I said. He babbled, with slack jaws: "Igna-tiev! Sasha . . . Ignatiev!" I turned and demanded: "Does some one know him?" They shook their heads. "Nobody here knows you," I said. "Sasha Ignatiev!" the caricature in the corner gargled. "Some one knows me!

. . . Ignatiev! Cattle-dealer . . . From Saratov!" Something reeled within me. "He who lived on the Semenskaia?" I asked. "Semenskaia!" it grinned evilly.

There I stood before the specter of my past, and the lamp shook in my hand. "What do you want?" I asked. There was no answer. "What do you want of me?" I asked, again. "I owe you nothing!" The form in front of me grinned: "Ignatiev," it babbled, "from Saratov!" I turned to the others behind me. "Four years ago!" I said. "I had a business deal with him. I delivered; he paid. Is there anything terrible in that?" I looked at them, one by one. Their faces were pale and reserved; only the old spinster nodded solemnly, gazing into my eyes. I turned back to the corner. "I had to sell!" I shouted. "I had to get away! They would have stood me up against a wall! I hid in a ship, in the hold, among bundles of stinking cow-hides . . . She wouldn't have gone with me!" I broke off. The lamp shook in my hand. There was no answer; nobody spoke, and it seemed as if they had all stepped back from me and had come to an understanding among themselves. I shrieked into the corner: "You wanted to buy her! You came to me, and said: 'Leave your wife with me!' Did I offer her to you?" The creature grinned. "You!" I roared. "From Saratov!" it gargled, there in the corner. "Sasha Ignatiev, from Saratov!"

Then, something came over me. I saw red before my eyes, and I threw . . . threw the lamp, the burning kerosene lamp, at the grinning specter in the corner. Something scorched through my veins like an electric shock. I fell to the floor. Darkness rained down on me.

When I awoke, I still lay where I had fallen. Some one had thrust a pillow under my head. There, turned away from me, alone in the room, stood Fräulein Kurila. I saw the profile of her old face, tense and watchful. She stood bent over the sofa. I raised myself on my elbow and saw that some one was lying there—Ruben. He lay there, pale, with closed eyes, breathing steadily. A cloth covered his forehead, and blood oozed through a thin, vertical line, over the eye down along the cheek. Fräulein Kurila turned an awed gaze upon me, and said, cautiously: "He is asleep!" I was overcome at her words, and went to Ruben and kissed him. Fräulein Kurila said: "I sent the others away. Ignaz, too. I thought you would want to take Ruben home." I nodded. We seated ourselves and waited. Not a word was spoken. The voices in the next room wailed and droned, insistently and hopelessly.

A half hour might have gone by before he awoke. Fräulein Kurila, on tiptoe, went into the kitchen. I sat on the edge of the sofa and looked down at my clumsy hands lying on my knees. Ruben sighed. I did not look up. Then, he said, in an indifferent voice: "Did the thin man with the swallow-head go away? He had sad eyes." And, almost whispering: "Why is he so sad? He smiles all the time, yet he is sad!" I did not answer. Suddenly, feeling his forehead, he said: "I wonder how I did this!" He seemed to be making a great effort to remember. "Did I fall? . . . How did I fall?" But immediately he forgot such serious concerns, and told me at great length about a gay experience with some birds that had come flying to him in the park. "A titmouse sat down on my hair!" he said, and laughed softly. Then, he lay quiet, looking up at the ceiling out of serene eyes.

Fräulein Kurila thrust her head in at the door and advised us to start for home. When we passed through the kitchen, Rafael Meier was there, and stopped me in some embarrassment. "I live on what my friends give me," he said. "I am poor . . . You broke the lamp." I gave him some money; he counted it, mumbled something, nodded slightly, and left through the glass door. For a moment, I could see into the room. It was filled with baskets, cribs and a baby carriage.

On a table stood a small, narrow black box. At its head four slim candles burned with meager, wretched flames.

We left. Fräulein Kurila took leave of us on the stairs, and disappeared. As we crossed the courtyard, I could see through one of the open, tunnel-like windows into one of the basement apartments. It was lighted. Around a table sat some men—cripples, in faded uniforms. At the head of the table sat the serious man whom they called Badele. He was reading aloud from a book. The others listened silently. He read in so low a voice that I could not understand a word.

Ruben begged me not to come home with him—he feared that his parents might become alarmed. He wanted to take the bandage off, but he was weak, and the blood had not entirely stopped flowing. So I went with him. When we arrived at the narrow, noisy street in which the Feuerbachs now lived, it was half-past nine. Ruben again urged me to turn back. I was adamant. On the fourth floor of a dreary tenement, he carefully unlocked a door and, after crossing a tiny vestibule, I found myself in a living-room overcrowded with furniture. It looked as if the furnishings of three rooms had been put into one. At a table in the center of the room, his back to me, sat a feeble, scrawny man, his thin, gray hair smoothed back over his rounded, bald head. Close by his side stood a glaring electric reading-lamp. He was bent close above his work and traced word after word in small, scribbly letters with an unsteady hand. "Father!" said Ruben. The man who was writing nodded, without interrupting his work. "I have brought a visitor!" said Ruben. Then, Feuerbach rose and turned toward me.

He stood before me and looked at me—that is to say, he looked past me. I could not help but notice that, thus suddenly turning from the glaring light to the comparative darkness of the room, he could not see me, but stared from behind his blue lenses past me at the wall. When Ruben told him who I was, and even when he offered me his hand in hearty greeting, hardly any change came over his face, where suffering had carved many little creases and wrinkles. He had grown very old. The suit he wore—it was a yellowish-gray, and hung loosely on his frame—I seemed to remember from times before the war. "I did not know you were living!" he said gently. "The Russians caught me that time in the funnel," I said. And he: "I was then still at the Isonzo." And, after a pause: "It cost me three fingers. And"—he pointed to his blue glasses—"and this." It was obvious that he did not wish to discuss it further, and that suited me, too. With a sweeping gesture, somewhat too hastily, he thrust the papers and envelopes scattered over the table into a drawer. "My work!" he said. "I love to work a little at night."

Ruben, apparently relieved that no one took any notice of him or his condition, withdrew. And so we sat, the two of us, opposite one another, without speaking. Only when the silence grew too oppressive did I point to the drawer in which he had placed the papers, and say: "Something new? A new book?" He gazed past me, and slowly shook his head in denial. "No," he said, in a low voice. "No . . . no . . . no! . . . Nothing!" He said no more. But then, as if afraid his silence might offend me, he added, hurriedly: "It is not so easy for me to write. Dictate? I tried that, and my wife acted as my amanuensis. She hasn't much to do now—we live very quietly, and the apartment is much smaller than any we have had before . . . We might be called unsociable!" he concluded, with a bitter smile.

"Ruben?" I asked. The man was silent. Then he said, shortly: "Ruben—a dear child!" And, after another pause: "His wisdom . . . is of the heart." After that, silence once more hung between our faces. Again as if afraid his silence might offend me, Feuerbach said: "Ruben . . . He is not very much at home. . . ." And, almost whispering: "Mirjam, too, is seldom home . . ."

"Mirjam!" I asked. I did not tell him that I had believed her dead. When they had placed her in the cholera-cart at Radymno, they said that she had died. Mirjam! Mirjam lives! I said to myself. "Since she is able to be about again . . ." Feuerbach continued. "Mirjam is a nurse. It is hard work. There is hardly a day or night when she is able to be home for sleep . . . What were we talking about? Oh, yes! So I dictated, and my wife wrote for me. Poems, articles . . . But it is not quite the same as it used to be. The new style of writing is strange to me. I don't speak their language, any more. But"—and, suddenly deeply agitated, he pressed his fingers into my arm and, as if confiding a secret, put his lips close to my ear—"but they will yet hear of me! When I am dead and buried, then they will recognize me!"

I did not answer. Mirjam lives! something kept saying within me. The door opened. Frau Feuerbach entered. She stiffened, when she saw me. Her face, the face of a nearly old woman, was still beautiful, but bitter passion and hidden privation had left their marks. "You haven't eaten your supper yet," she said, to her husband. "Do so now. The gentleman will excuse you." He arose almost eagerly and, bumping against two chairs, he left the room with a stammer of embarrassment.

Frau Feuerbach, who had gazed after him, turned abruptly to me. "You must not mention that you met me over there on the stairs," she said, quickly. I nodded. We were silent, avoiding each other's eyes. "Did Ruben bring you here?" she asked. "Yes." "He is always running around," she complained. "I don't know with whom he spends his days. Now it is Ignaz Klein, now this one, now that one!" She talked on and on, but her irascible chatter was of small significance; she was apparently merely trying to bridge an uncomfortable moment. I, likewise, clumsy lout that I was, felt ill at ease. "Yes . . . Ruben . . ." I ventured. "He is much alone, it seems. You have your housework, and your husband writes his books." I saw the hardened features of the woman soften under my words. Suddenly agitated, she looked into my eyes. Her face twitched. "My husband?" she said. "Do you want to know what he is working at?" she asked, with a certain tense calm. She beckoned me to her, pulled open the drawer, and let a number of envelopes flutter through her fingers. "Here! He is writing addresses—a thousand addresses for thirty kronen!" And, composed, but with inner lamentation: "If it were not for Mirjam—if Mirjam did not earn some money! . . ." She broke off. Feuerbach was standing in the doorway. He pointed his scrawny arm at the open drawer of the table, and said: "I forbid that! I won't have—" He gasped, and put his hand to his heart. Frau Feuerbach fetched him a glass of water. I left.

WHEN I arrived at the house, there were four or five automobiles lined up before the entrance. The second floor—Fräulein Calé's rooms—were brilliantly lighted, as were the windows facing the courtyard. There, twenty or thirty of the tenants had gathered. They stood in the darkness, staring up at the lighted curtains, across which shadows glided. "Now, they are dancing!" said one. From some inner room, the sound of music drifted down to us faintly. I strode into the midst of the group, and asked what it all was about. The shoemaker took his pipe out of his mouth, spat, and said: "Thursday! Every third Thursday, they have a dance." "At Calé's?" I said. "In that sporting-house?" "Sporting-house?" He spat again, hesitated, and said: "That's not a sporting-house. That's a club. Every third

Thursday, she rents her flat to a crowd of people. Rich people. Women, too." He shoved his pipe between his teeth, and turned away. Children—up late—played with a cat. Upstairs, the shadows of dancing couples circled past. "Now, they are dancing!" said Jablonski, and swayed, his arms around the waist of an imaginary partner—now mincingly, now stumbling ludicrously—among the laughing spectators. Some one came across the courtyard and joined the others. "They fill their bellies!" he said. "That Calé woman hired a chef for this evening. They are having roast pork and asparagus." A woman said, meaningfully: "Asparagus—that's the right thing for them to eat! Asparagus—that does the trick!" There was a burst of laughter at this sally. Jablonski made an obscene gesture. Shrieking children were playing at run-and-catch among the gaping crowd. "They have more up there than just a roast," said a face in the darkness. Some one answered: "Champagne!" Then, there was silence.

By now, there was also light on the new stairway, leading from the courtyard to the rear rooms. Two gentlemen and a lady, muffled in furs, went up and disappeared. For a moment, the music came clearly through the open door and spent itself in the night. One of the spectators had promptly seized another, and soon four or five couples were dancing on the dark flagstones. A voice shrilled: "They eat! They have furs! And women! And money!" Another answered derisively: "Money isn't worth anything, any more!" Some one else: "But they have foreign money! That's worth double to-morrow what it's worth to-day." A few yawned and left, melting into doors and hallways, into the blackness of their rooms. There were only six or seven left looking up at the lighted windows. "Anna is standing in line to-night for some potatoes," said a woman. No one answered. Up there, shadows were dancing. Somewhere in the dark, somebody asked: "Did you get any margarine?" Steps died away. The courtyard was empty. I was alone.

I walked over to the newly built staircase. Through the outer glass door, I could discern the steps leading up to the door of the apartment. The room behind the two windows to the right of the entrance seemed to be used as a cloak-room, for the shadows of several people could be seen—obviously new arrivals, taking off their wraps. I listened and tried the knob of the glass door. It was locked. So I turned away, and walked slowly through the courtyard along the wall of the front-house toward the side-house. In Meier's apartment there was a light—a flickering candle-light; the little black box probably was still on the table. The other windows of the side house lay brooding in darkness. Only one—the one that recalled my grandmother, my youth—glistened eerily.

I went on, keeping close to the wall, along the side-house, as far as the rear corner. Suddenly, I realized that I had begun to walk cautiously, bending slightly forward, and carefully keeping in the shadows. In the corner, I stood still, waited, and listened. From the basement, from the shoemaker's room, the stentorian breathing of the sleeping man came and went. Badele's window stood open. I fancied I heard some one reading aloud out of a book. But when I tiptoed closer, I saw that the room was in complete darkness. Nothing stirred. Shadows of dancers moved behind the lighted window-shades in the front-house. There, they danced; there, they had women, and money, and their bellies were full.

There was a sound. Two shadows detached themselves from the wall and dissolved into the night. Tangled strands of Fate ran through the old house. I thought of the hundreds of living beings in those rooms—breathing, unconscious puppets. I shivered. I ducked lower, like a stalking hunter, and crept along the rear-house to the corner of the board-fence; thence along the fence to the glass door of the brothel. I had circled the court.

The light in the cloak-room had been extinguished. I saw that the glass door was ajar. Through a slight crack yawned Stygian darkness. I stooped, cautiously pushed back the door, and slid into the darkness. At that moment, the music swelled in volume and drowned the faint creaking. I stood and listened. Nothing . . . silence. Slowly, my eyes accustomed themselves to the night, and felt rather than saw the paneled railing, tiger-spotted by the faint shimmer that came through the tiny panes of the glass door, and then the steps, crawling upward to the apartment. There, minute rays crept through the cracks and slits of the door. I was about to push forward, up the stairs, when my ear caught a faint scratching—such a scratching as can be heard when a rat climbs a wooden wall and starts sliding back. Silence. Then, for a moment, I thought I heard metal scraping on metal. But once more the music grew louder, and effaced the sound. I stood motionless, pressed into the corner of the stairs, listening. I heard nothing. A long quarter of an hour passed.

Suddenly, steps could be heard, upstairs, inside; there was a sound of groping, of stumbling; fragments of words, laughter. It was probably some of the guests, coming back here from one of the front rooms. A voice, thick with wine, said: "Go on! Leave me alone! Hell! Get away from me! I'll be with you again, in a few moments!" Protesting and snickering, the other voices died away. Some one remained, groped for the knob within, and opened the door to the staircase.

A blinding square of light suddenly appeared above me, and silhouetted against the light stood the supercilious figure of a man in evening clothes. His face, framed by bushy white hair, was in the shadow. His collar had sprung open, and gaped. His wine-laden breath came malodorously down the stairs. The man stood without movement, silently peering before him. Then, he bent forward into the darkness, and whispered: "Is some one there?" He stood and listened. Nothing stirred. He stepped out onto the landing of the staircase.

At this moment, I saw a broad, red hand come creeping out of the blackness into the light. The man, his senses blunted by intoxication, was not aware of it. He whispered again: "Is some one there?" Then, the red hand clasped him by the wrist and jerked him back. He emitted a startled cry into the darkness. A dull blow fell. The body crumpled and fell down on the steps. Somebody hissed: "Quick, now!"

It was then I must have moved. The wooden railing, against which I was leaning, creaked loudly. Up there—a sudden silence, a wild curse, and two forms raced madly toward me down the stairs. For a fraction of a second, something short, pointed and shining hung before my face and lunged past my throat into the air. The glass door was torn wide open and clattered against the wall. Two forms plunged into the night.

I ran up the stairs, groped about in the darkness, found the body, and dragged it, a lifeless sack, over the threshold of the open door into the lighted corridor of the Calé house. From thence, through a half-open door at the left, covered with and fitting into the wall-paper, I pulled him into a small room. In the glow of a red-shaded floor lamp, the meretricious splendor of the three armchairs, the imitation fireplace and sheepskin-covered couch appeared drab and moldy. I lifted the assaulted man onto the couch and placed him on his back. Before me lay Abel—Johannes Abel—looking up at me out of reddened eyes. He was alive and conscious, but dead drunk. "I fell!" he mumbled. "Damn women! Stumbled in the darkness . . . By now, she has run away." "Some one knocked you down," I said. He could not understand this; he knew nothing of what had happened. He groped unsteadily for his waistcoat pocket, out of which peered the edge of a paper. I pulled it out and unfolded it. There I saw written, in large, carefully drawn letters: "Wait for me on rear steps. Two-thirty. Come alone. A sweet surprise!" He giggled: "Little devil! Where is she?" I did not answer, and gave him back the note which had lured him to the stairs.

Meanwhile, his red-veined eyes had been looking closely into mine. He lifted his arm awkwardly, and said, in a somewhat clearer voice, although his tongue was still heavy: "I know you!" It was a reunion of maudlin, drunken sentimentality. "Boy! Boy!" he babbled. "You were supposed to have been shot!" And then: "We are alive! All of us! We are all of us alive!" A sodden gayety swept over him. The adventure with the two unknown men on the staircase had cost him only a lump on the back of his head. I tried to explain the incident to him. For a few moments, he seemed sobered. But then, the fumes of the wine overcame him again. "My saviour!" he cried, with tears of drunken emotion. He rose with difficulty, reeled over to me, and embraced me. Then, nausea overcame him, and he begged me for a glass of water. I stepped into the corridor, and looked about. Through the open entrance door, in the darkness of the staircase, I saw the shimmer of a face. I leaped toward it; a shadow glided away, and I heard its retreating footsteps. I locked the door securely. Then, I turned back. The cloakroom to the right of the corridor was locked; the key was not there. There were four or five more doors to the right and left, doubtless leading into rooms similar to the one in which Abel was waiting. From behind the turn of the hallway came loud, screeching music, the scraping of dancing feet, and the intermingling of voices and laughter. I found no water. On a small table stood a wine bottle, half empty. I took it, and went back to Abel. "Thirsty!" he mumbled. He bent back and drank . . . drank. He placed the emptied bottle in the air beside the table. It fell to the floor and broke. I had thrown myself upon the couch, and there I lay, my hands clasped behind my neck, and laughed.

For over the mumbling, babbling, reeling man in the wine-stained dress-suit had suddenly come a singular, crazy solemnity. He had stepped behind one of the chairs, supporting himself on the back of it first with one hand and then the other, and turning to the fireplace, to the wall, to the Nothingness about him, he began, with grandiose gestures, to deliver a speech into space. "Gentlemen!" he babbled, "I open the meeting! What is the order of the day? The order of the day am I!" he shouted. Then, his words became indistinguishable. He pulled some telegrams out of his pockets; his pockets seemed to be filled with them—telegrams from all parts of the world—and now he stood there like an orator, and read: "London! Paris, 14⅜; Berlin, 134; Zürich, 11½ and 11⅝; Vienna, 217." He unfolded another, and read: "10,000 best closing price; stop; buy Magnesite!" He interrupted himself, and said to me, with the air of one conferring a medal: "Do you understand, man? Magnesite!"

I lay on the couch, and hardly listened to what he was saying. I stretched myself, and laughed in his face. "Fool!" I laughed. "Poor fool!" That angered him. He put his hand into his pocket and pulled out a dozen, two dozen more crushed telegrams: "Don't laugh, man!" he shouted. Although he was now turned toward me, he still addressed the wall behind me: "I will arrange exportation permits for the demobilization goods. Yes, I! But the cheese isn't worth the cost of transportation. It will walk home by itself!" He chuckled. "Margarine?" he said. "Margarine! When the famine comes, they'll eat it! . . . 1,214,320! Who covers that? Not I! I will exchange Zürich for Madrid, for the difference in the rates of interest . . . But then, we must sell oil!" He whispered the words. Oh, he was drunk! "Fool!" I laughed. "Poor fool!" I lay on the couch, and laughed.

Presently, I heard them come out of the dance-hall and roam through the corridors, amid laughter and shouting. "Abel! Where is the old darling?" a woman's voice called. "Fool!" I laughed. "Poor fool!" Abel, now sobered, stood before me and shouted: "Why are you staring at me, man? Why do you laugh at me? Tramp! Shabby tramp! If Fräulein Calé sees you here, she'll send you flying through the window!" Then, more quietly: "Don't be an idiot! You did me a service. Do you need some money?" He pulled out his wallet, stuck two fingers into it, and waved the bank notes in my face. "This is money, boy! Money! Or would you rather make some for yourself? There is money laying on every street! . . . You are engaged, sir! As my secretary!" Drunkenness seized him once more. He held onto the back of a chair with both hands.

The door flew open. "Abel! Abel, darling!" the masked women shrieked, as they crowded into the room. The faces of men, flushed with wine, floated nearer. "Money!" roared Abel. "Money! We buy! We buy! We owe for it! Let them sue us! Two years from now, they'll get their money! Has anybody ever heard of cheaper credit?" Bleating, snickering and chuckling, three, five, then eight flushed men's faces pressed nearer. "Money!" cried Abel. "Money!" shrieked the women, hanging round his neck. With two fingers, he lunged into the wallet and threw the paper into the air. Fighting and screaming, men and women scuffled on the floor for the bills. "Money!" roared Abel, and suddenly stood, reeling, on a chair. "Money!" he roared. "It's lying on the streets! . . . We eat! We eat!"

"We eat!" cried, howled, roared the flushed faces. On the floor, they scuffled. And high above the tumult, reeling on his chair, Abel stood and roared.

Then, I felt a look on me. I turned my face toward the door. There leaned a woman in a dancing frock which was ripped open down the side. The torn-off mask still hung like a dead bat, suspended from her temple. There she stood, motionless, with ashen face. . . . There stood Mirjam Feuerbach, and looked at me.

THE PLUNGE TO THE TOP

THUS, it came about that I sat in the narrow room next to Samuel Klein's office and interviewed the people who wanted to see him. And thus I acquired the blue-striped suit, which I bought with the money Geza Balogh gave me when he wanted Klein to buy a quantity of swollen cans of condensed milk. But after that, I took no more bribes—not even from Abel, who called me twice a week into his private office and tried to question me as to what sort of deals Klein was contriving on his own account and as to who came to see him. I no longer took bribes. When De Letter, the man from Amsterdam, declared me in on two deals in Alpine and next day, with a meaningful look, threw down before me 3800 kronen as my share of the profits, I did not say yes or no, and for the time being did nothing at all regarding his canned goods proposition. I merely told him I would look him up at four o'clock, at the coffee-house. He poked me in the belly, said that suited him, laughed, and left; but I could see that he was furious. Count Warre, the pink-eyed duffer, who came again and again for a loan on some jewels, I simply threw out of the office. He could go to Birkmeier, if he liked. Hamburg had sent us dollar-drafts, redeemable in two months, and bought rubber coats with them. Klein's face grew green with fury, and he sent me to the coffee-house to cover this amount by buying two-months dollars. I did not succeed, as all the brokers had gone home for their midday meal. The headwaiter offered me a hundred in bills. That did me no good, so I advised him to hold on. At two o'clock, Berlin telephoned for Polish marks. Solely for reasons of prestige, Klein offered them a million, although we had none ourselves. I bought them at Kronfuss, and we made three points' profit. There was no business with New York. Berlin offered merchandise at fourteen kronen above par. While Klein went down to the restaurant, where he was to meet the newly arrived Frenchman with the decayed teeth, I had to visit Berkel, the head of a department in the Central Bureau of the Foreign Exchange. I took with me a sealed envelope. Berkel accepted sealed envelopes, and his office colleague did the same, so there was no trouble there. "Report IV" was similarly easy to manage —the Hofrat fancied Berlin stocks. Only "Report III" was difficult: some people had no brains, and would rather starve than join the parade. State officials! Bah! The clothes hung loose on their bodies—no, sir, they would not accept sealed envelopes! With Berkel, it was different. I went back to the office in a taxicab. The secretary of the editorial office of *Truth* telephoned (that blonde aristocrat, Farkas's secretary) and wanted to know the authentic closing prices—naturally, on account of the five hundred share Abel Works block which Farkas had taken over the day before. And could she have a few of the gray felt hats before the auction —for herself, personally? I sent her an order, and then she told me that something was stirring in Abel stock. An increase of capitalization, or something like that. Farkas had dictated a boosting article for the Saturday edition which indicated as much. I simulated astonishment. Then, I asked her if she ever went to the movies, or indulged in any such diversions. She laughed and refused. This satisfied me, for now she was under the impression that I did not know how things stood between her and Farkas. I told Klein about it. He patted me on the cheek, and reminded me that the two-months dollars had not yet been covered. It was also time for me to see De Letter. So I left.

There was not much business being done in the coffeehouse—it was Monday afternoon, and the Exchange annex had been closed upon news of the revolt of the sailors in Stettin. The only activity in the place was around the cashier's desk, where were gathered ten or twelve men from Lemberg and Czernowitz, who had merchandise for sale—Western coal and cargoes of imported goods. De Letter beckoned to me with a spoon. He sat on a plush sofa at a window table, eating eggs. His vest was filthy, as usual, although he had a paper napkin sticking in his collar. He was not really a native Amsterdamer. He had lived in Podhajce until 1914, managing a country estate, and had left for Holland just before the Russian invasion. From thence, he had sold an enormous consignment of marmalade to the Eighth Army Division, at the time when so many cases of illness were reported from there. Now, for the last four months, he had been here, making money. He prodded me in the belly, laughed, and told the waiter to fetch me some soft-boiled eggs and coffee. Then, he talked about the heat and the Bucharest Exchange. He was skeptical of lei, because the Government was prohibiting the exportation of meat. "We are going to see some real meat prices here!" he said, and whistled through his teeth, by way of indicating that he thought they would go very high. "They will stand before the butcher shops until their feet touch their bellies. It will be as bad as it was in 1918!" he said, visionary and smelling faintly of herring. I saw what he was driving at. "Armour will sell us as much corned beef and frozen meats as we want," I replied. He neglected his eggs for a moment. "Who has money for Armour?" he squeaked. "Who can pay thirty American cents a pound?" Then, shoving back his hat, he started to whisper. He knew where there were five hundred and twenty carloads of old canned goods—meats; stores of the American Army, left behind at Calais—piled mountain-high in the open air, exposed to rain and wind. A great quantity of this was still edible. And it would not cost anything—a mere pittance; the price of a sandwich. This was one deal which he wanted to put over with us. He prodded me in the belly and showed his teeth in a grin. I remained non-committal, and promised to take it up—at an opportune time—with Klein. Then, I called Fenichel over to the table and gave him an order to buy me two thousand dollars on a sixty-day note. The little old man smacked his wet lips and—without hat or coat—rushed out into the street. De Letter asked, with a searching look: "Dollars?" I said: "We have sold them to Budapest." He nodded, and I saw that he did not believe me. He toyed with a button of my coat, and pressed the question: "Now, about these canned meats . . ." but he broke off abruptly, for Geza Balogh sat down beside me, without as much as a greeting, and pulled his hat over his eyes, in order to wipe the perspiration from the back of his neck. The skinny little person took an ivory toothpick out of his pocket and occupied himself with his teeth. After a long pause, he asked, casually: "Canned meats?" "Yes," I answered. He spat on the floor. "Manure!" he said. De Letter flushed a deep red, and hammered the table with his fist. "How do you know?" he rumbled. Balogh closed one eye and scrutinized his palate in a little pocket mirror. "I have a sore throat," he said. De Letter insisted: "What do you know about these canned meats?" Balogh repeated: "Manure!" and breathed noisily. De Letter laughed raspingly, and shot a poisonous look at the Hungarian. Balogh had to go to the toilet. But before the big fellow could start upon his proposition again, Fenichel appeared in the doorway and motioned to me through the smoke. I said good-by, and left. Oh, I had influence, and I had money! I possessed six pairs of shoes and a tuxedo. And I spent my nights where I pleased, here and there. And I had friends.

And twice, the little blonde from downstairs went to a hotel with me. And I could eat as much as I wanted.

When, after that night in Fräulein Calé's apartment, Abel took me into his business—or rather, when he placed me outside Klein's door, in order to have an additional watchman upon the little Jew—I discovered that I had quite some talent for the kind of business that was being done in Abel's offices at that time. What I lacked in prudence, training and knowledge was counterbalanced by the insight into human character that I had gained in my eight wild years, by my ruthlessness in taking what was to be taken, and by my energy, which was unhampered by scruples. And even if Samuel Klein—who, by the way, had not in the least altered in any particular of manner, dress and character—knew how to combine and to hold the different ramifications of the business in his hand, he nevertheless seemed glad of my services, now and then, as his situation in the center of the spider-web became increasingly difficult day by day.

The great boom of the Abel Works had started in the spring of 1915, with the award of an order for twenty carloads of Victory Chocolate. On July 12th, Samuel Klein was given the title of director, and Birkmeier received a bonus of 2200 kronen. On the first of August, they delivered sixty-two carloads of nutritive cocoa; and on the ninth of August, Birkmeier was arrested for food adulteration and fraud. The sentence specified for two weeks in jail. A laborer named Balaun received four hundred kronen, reported in Birkmeier's stead, and served out the sentence. After deducting these four hundred kronen, there remained a profit of 182,200 kronen on this cocoa deal. In order to assure absolute safety, the firm was changed into a G.m.b.H.* Klein received ten percent of the stock on the company, but was obliged to allow Abel an option for the re-purchase of these shares within a period of three years. On September 17th, Birkmeier also became a director, with a special compensation of two-elevenths of one percent on the sales.

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* Limited liability corporation.

From then until the end of the war, hardly anything of consequence happened, apart from the enormous marmalade business, which, incidentally, brought on a bitter competitive struggle and subsequently a close friendship with De Letter of Amsterdam. Wind-fallen fruit was boiled with saccharine and mixed with two-thirds quantities of turnips. Two hundred carloads were sold to the Army, and Abel received the Order of the Red Eagle, fifth class. The Geweka petitioned to buy one hundred carloads for distribution among the Associations of Provincial Consumers, and had already paid Birkmeier 115,000 kronen on account of his commission for procuring the marmalade for them. At the last moment, however, the Wikox organization put Samuel Klein on their board of directors. Consequently, that firm secured first option on the output of the Abel Works, and in exchange they contrived, by devious methods, to procure for Abel the horse-blanket contract for the Fourth Army Division. Abel included Birkmeier in partnership with him in these deals, giving him fifteen percent—which was by no means too much, as this had to be divided with Victor, the cousin in the War Ministry, who in turn had a friend in the commissariat department to look after. At about this time, Abel bought the Excelsior factory, took over the firm of Brauntal & Co. and two small factories in Cracow. To facilitate buying, he quietly organized a wholesale produce company and, just about at the end of the war, opened branches in Hamburg, Rotterdam and Trieste, which enabled him, as agent of foreign firms, to sell to his own establishments against drafts of foreign currency. Through this transaction, he could now keep his factories operating without cash, and the profits thereby realized Samuel Klein used in the purchase of sauerkraut. This they held too long, and it began to stink; but treated with a little ammonia, it was as good as fresh. The Wikox people rejected it, but the city took it over for its municipal food stations.

It was about this time that Abel took me into the business. In order to meet the sudden fall of the kronen and to be able to take better advantage of the mad rise in all quotations on the Stock Exchange, Klein, about two months before, had converted the Abel Works into an A.G.,* at the same time, giving official notice of the opening of a separate banking department. This banking department, originally created for our own requirements in foreign drafts, was soon engaged in financing the exportation and importation of merchandise of all descriptions. And inasmuch as Birkmeier had his hands full with the supervision of the factory, and as Abel himself was an erratic and moody worker, it was only natural that Klein soon found his duties swamping him. I could little assist or relieve him in affairs of consequence, as I lacked the experience; but I did what I could to help him and, in order to gain his good will and confidence, I worked with intense concentration. A few days later, half an hour before the closing of the Stock Exchange, I achieved my purpose.

This was the case: Birkmeier had sold, in an underhand way, fifty carloads of the old canned meats—the deal with De Letter having come to a successful conclusion—to be delivered on call within three months. He had sold it, to be sure, at a decent price, but against cash in kronen on delivery. This meant that the buyer, a wholesaler of ill repute and questionable responsibility, could speculate at our expense by awaiting the fall of the Exchange, having undertaken to pay a fixed price in steadily falling kronen, while our own original cost had to be paid in steadily rising francs, thereby endangering the success of the whole deal. Klein, furious at Birkmeier's clumsy and disastrous invasion of his own domain and put on his guard by the information of a detective agency that Birkmeier's cousin, Victor, the former army officer, had lately joined the firm of this wholesaler as a silent partner, and greatly alarmed, moreover, by a telephone message from Paris notifying him of a fresh and decisive collapse of the Austrian krone in London, to take place within a few hours—Klein, therefore, found himself in a position where he had to cover, without delay and in francs, the original cost of those fifty carloads. The allotments from the Central Bureau of the Foreign Exchange in those days were hardly five percent of the registered requirements; in the open market—since others had undoubtedly received the same information from Paris—no foreign drafts could be bought; and so Klein resolved, half an hour before the closing of the Stock Exchange, upon a circuitous expedient: he decided to buy any sort of securities that could be sold for foreign money in Paris, London and Zürich. No information regarding prices was to be had, so Klein summoned me. We ran, threw ourselves into a taxicab, and hastened to the Stock Exchange.

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* Joint stock company.

The kibitzers on the steps, mostly war refugees, Galician Jews in caftans, had to be roughly pushed aside to enable us to reach the entrance. The deserted smoking-room with its plush sofas was filled with stale cigarette smoke. Klein, paler than usual, more insignificant and more stoop-shouldered, gazed unseeingly about him, and then rushed toward the entrance of the floor, from which a buzzing of voices, shouts and signals, a confusion of frantic gestures and jumbled crowds and an odor of sour perspiration fairly smote us in the face. At the counter, in the center of this immense, echoing building, it was no busier than usual—a few brokers, a few bank representatives, and aside from the members at their boards, there was hardly a soul. The market was steady; all counter securities were running above par, and even the otherwise neglected loans, covered by silver, were normal. But business was quiet, aside from the trading in the unstamped war-loans that were being taken out of the market—even if need be at lower prices—in large quantities by the Polish and Czech Governments. Those who had no official business at the counter were milling with the others on the floor, where the moving mob seemed at times to be on the verge of a general brawl. Klein seized my arm and pulled me over to Rima. On the way, Pollak, of Biberstein Brothers, shouted: "Klein! Klein! Herr Klein!" Klein did not turn. Pollak rushed after us and, with flaming ears, shrieked: "Abel 315! I buy!" Klein said: "Nothing doing!" and hastened on. Pollak grabbed him by the shoulder, shouting: "330! 350! I buy at 350!" Without a word, Klein tore himself loose and threw himself between Wahliss and the Rothschild representative in the Rima circle. I kept close behind him, bellowing: "What is being offered?" No one answered. Before me stood Gross, the floor man for Bock of Budapest; he stood there, squeezed in between sweating, howling maniacs, throwing his arm into the air and roaring hoarsely: "8400! 8400! 8400! 8450!" Klein piped: "What is asked?" Gross threw his hand into the air and howled: "I buy at 8450! 8450! 8480!" Klein shouted again: "What is asked?" Wahliss said: "9000!" Some one laughed: "Meshugge!" "8480! 8480! 8550!" roared Gross. "8550! 8550! 8590!" said three or four others, and threw up their fingers. "I sell at 9000!" said Wahliss. Bendiener's broker, the lean one with the bald head, jumped across from the telephone and came close. "9000? Taken!" he screamed, red blotches on his face. "Two hundred shares!" Wahliss said: "Twenty-five to you. All I have." Bendiener's man shook his fist into the other's face. "That's an outrage!" he screamed. "With twenty-five shares, he makes prices! He ought to be reported!" Wahliss muttered some retort, but I could not understand him. A few others rushed over from the telephones, shouting: "9000!" . . . "9000!" . . . "9200!" . . ."9300!" Klein's face blazed, and he squeaked: "9500! 9800! I buy!" Gross turned to him and roared, foam flecking his lips: "This is insane! Unheard of! You're bulling the prices!" He turned abruptly to the others. "9200 with me is good money!" he shouted. "9220 is par. I offer 9200 to 9300! 9200 to 9300!" he said to Rothschild. "To me!" he said to Bendiener. They made notations, and again became quiet.

Klein drew me away. "Why didn't you buy?" I asked. He was pale. "I couldn't!" he sighed. "The paper was too high. We would have to deal through Budapest. We'd lose on price and on exchange. We have no telephone. Cost too much. Come along!" At Alpine, we stopped and looked over the floor. Men fought for the high-priced stocks. Collars gaped. Perspiration glistened on bald heads. Calls and gesticulations; bidding, refusing and imploring hands, lifted aloft and drowning again, darted like flickering flames above the hubbub. At the counter, a bell clanked. An attendant walked across the floor and called in nasal tones: "Bauch! Karl Bauch! Karl Bauch—telephone! Herr Bauch! Bauch! Herr Bauch!" The members closed their books and thronged on the floor to ascertain the closing prices and to buy and sell on their own account. No one thought of leaving. Trading continued after closing with increased vigor.

As for Klein, he stood pale and weary beside me, his shoulders hunched, his arms limp. We went to the corner where foreign stocks are sold. Pollak still stood there with five or six others, trading in Abel. The shares stood at 480 to 520. Klein sold a thousand at 510. The names of little known stocks were heard here; not a day passed but that a few new ones appeared. A scrawny, seedy, unshaven man called

"Schweizer-Glass! I sell Schweizer-Glass at 210! 210! I sell at 210!" No one paid any attention to him. He cried: "I sell Schweizer-Glass at 200!" Klein grew attentive. "Is that a Swiss security?" he asked, close to my ear. I had never even heard of it. "Buy!" he said. I bought a hundred shares at 195. Klein said, loudly: "Schweizer-Glass! I buy at 195! 205! 215!" A few men, who were trading in Hochdorfer Machines, glanced at him. Klein cried: "I take Schweizer-Glass at 230!" From a corner, some one sold. "240!" The unshaven dealer bought another two hundred shares. Klein shouted: "Schweizer-Glass! I buy at 250! . . . 250! . . . 280!" A fat man, bald as a billiard ball, said: "I sell at 320!" "How many?" "A thousand shares." Klein threw up his hand and squealed: "One thousand Schweizer-Glass taken at 320!" They had stopped doing business in Hochdorfer Machines. Ten or fifteen brokers stood around us. One shouted: "I buy Schweizer-Glass at 330! . . . 340!" A small banker sold five hundred shares at 360. The outsiders, gambling along with us, bought another two thousand. Klein threw his hand into the air, crying shrilly: "400! . . . 400! . . . 400!" He got two thousand shares. At least thirty men stood around us, shouting and screaming. Shares were bought at 450 and 480. Those who sold were brokers and small bankers. Then, Fischer shoved his big belly through the mob—Fischer the Bear. He stood there, watching, saying not a word. Klein threw up his hand. "480!" he cried. Beside me, some one asked: "What is Schweizer-Glass?" Another answered: "Klein knows what he is doing. It is safe to trail along." Some one, roaring with excitement, bought up to 530. Klein lifted his face to me and whispered: "They are driving up the price! Over there stands Fischer, waiting. We must stabilize! Tell somebody to buy!" "How many?" He looked at me out of the corner of his eye, as if amused, and said, shortly: "As many as you can get!" I caught Fenichel at Alpine and told him to buy. He thrust his way into the mob with weak elbows, threw up his fingers, and piped in his senile voice: "540! 540! . . . I buy at 540!" Klein, in a voice audible to all, shouted: "Sold!" Fenichel scribbled, with obvious anxiety, and bought a hundred shares. "540!" he called again. Again Klein roared: "Sold!" Fenichel scribbled again, still more bewildered. His mouth stood open, and he looked helplessly at me. "Sold!" shouted Klein. Many laughed. A few swore. Ten or fifteen turned away. "Swindler!" some one said, aloud. Klein's face was blotched. The bullish movement had been curbed. The twenty men who still remained stood around, not knowing what to do, waiting. Some one, hesitantly, offered once more to buy. Klein snapped: "I sell at 540! . . . 530! . . . 520!" More laughter. Some one cried: "Good-by! I'm going!" Then Fischer, in his corner, opened his frog-like mouth, and croaked: "I sell at 500! . . . I sell at 480! . . . I sell at 460!" Klein quickly turned to me. "He has started!" he said. "How do we stand?" I calculated hastily. "We have bought 17,200 shares." Klein, his lips twitching, muttered: "Then I've got to hold the price!" Fischer croaked: "I sell at 400!" Klein squealed: "Taken!" The crowd became tense again.

From this point, the contest became serious. Fischer sold a thousand shares at a time. Klein took all he offered. Fischer sold ten thousand at 380. Klein bought, and offered 410. Fischer sold ten thousand at that price, and asked 370 for twenty thousand. Klein again bought. Thirty or forty men now stood around us. They sold short, and went along with Fischer to 340, 330, 300. At 295, new shares were thrown into the fray. Klein—hoarse and ashen-faced, his cravat askew and perspiration on his brow—still bought. It was of no avail. The price dropped to 220, to 200. Fischer cried, in his trumpet voice: "180!" Klein gasped into my ear: "How do we stand? For God's sake, do some figuring!"

I calculated, and then said, in a low voice: "We have bought 224,800 shares of Schweizer-Glass at an average of 385." Fischer trumpeted: "I sell at 175! . . . 170!" Klein swayed slightly. He leaned against me, and whispered: "We are done for! We won't be able to pay!" Then, screaming loudly, insanely: "I buy! I buy at 175! At 180!"

At that moment, two men came running from the telephone, and behind them, three or four more. Passing us, one of them shouted: "Closing price of the London Exchange—the krone at 36,400!" A fat, oily trader screamed: "Just half what it was yesterday!" Vogel, of Vogel, Jr., pulled some bills out of his wallet, sneering: "It's cheaper than dirt! Writing-paper is worth more!" Some one laughed bitterly: "You mean, toilet paper!" Gross, of Bock, Budapest, shouted: "I buy Rima!" He rushed away. A vulture-headed bystander rasped: "One must buy what one can!" Samuel Klein threw both hands into the air, and shrieked: "I buy Schweizer-Glass at 200! . . . At 250!" Fischer remained silent. Some one shouted: "I bid 280! . . . 280! . . . 280!" More people came over, and crowded around us. Klein shrieked: "300 bid!" There was no selling. A few shares changed hands at 320. Over in his corner, Fischer opened his frog-like mouth and said: "You are all crazy!" Some one shrieked some incomprehensible gibberish into his face. A goat-beard bleated: "He must have gambled along with him!" They now bought at 350, at 380. Some one threatened Fischer with his fists, shrilling: "He hasn't got a share! He sold short!" At 400, Fischer was buying with bloodless lips. Shouts, screams, frenzied hands. At 520, Fischer was led away by his son-in-law. The goat-beard still bought at 580. Lips foamed, hands fluttered. A bulldog barked: "600!" At 610, Klein sold the first ten thousand shares. "630!" the bulldog barked. Klein sold. The vulture pecked forward and bought twelve thousand shares at 640.

Others shouted, screamed, barked and squealed . . . storks, polecats, ferrets, hyenas. Klein sold. Perspiration dripped. A collar fell to the floor. One man tried to climb up upon another's shoulder, shouting, shouting, shouting. The vulture screamed: "710!" The bulldog slavered: "770!" Klein sold. A bell clanked. An attendant rasped: "Bauch! Herr Bauch—telephone!" Some one stumbled away, roaring. One man seized another by the shoulders and spat figures, figures, figures into his face. A drenched corpse spread his fingers and clawed. I calculated. We had unloaded, with a crazy profit. I grasped Klein by the arm and dragged him out of the mêlée, through the scuffling crowd, to the door.

In the smoking-room, he collapsed. I placed him on the plush sofa and gave him brandy. A reporter of a financial newspaper rushed in and seized me. "What do you know about Schweizer-Glass?" he panted. "What information have you about Schweizer-Glass?" "Isn't it true," he gasped, "that Schweizer & Glass is the knitting-works in Graz? But that firm is close to bankruptcy!" Klein laughed hysterically, and was still laughing when I lifted him into the taxicab. "Come to dinner with me at my home!" he said, weakly. I went with him.

KLEIN now lived in Goethestrasse, on the third floor of the former palace of Count Geldern, the first and second floors of which were now occupied by the banking firm of Leiser & Bonaventura. Klein rang the bell. The door was opened by his sister, who, little changed, although now somewhat more fat, greeted me curtly and at once disappeared through another door, from behind which drifted the odors of cooking. We entered a high-ceiled dining-room, crowded with heavy German Renaissance furniture. The table was laid. A carpet brush and a flat dust-pan lay next to the sofa; above the buffet hung an enormous painting, portraying innumerable items of animal and vegetable food. Klein asked me to be seated and rang the bell. Then, as no one answered, he opened the door leading into the corridor and called to some woman, three or four times, in rising anger. Something moved outside, scraping along in slippers, and an unkempt, black-haired, very fat and exceedingly dirty servant came into the room and, in a petulant voice, asked what was the matter. The outcome of a very heated argument was that four sandwiches were brought in to us. Klein thrust them, one by one, into his mouth and swallowed them—as it seemed to me—whole. "Hungry!" he said, gulping. Then, he threw himself upon the sofa and laughed drily, doubtless at recollections of his late victorious struggle.

Dinner was served. We sat down at the table. The sister came in, adorned with an apron and smelling of multifarious odorous things. We ate with heavy silver off heavy damask. A little later, Moritz, Klein's younger son, came in. His look evaded mine. He led into the room and to a chair a very young, but physically abnormally developed girl, with large, heavy-lidded eyes and beautiful, thick braids of blond hair. The plump child sat down without a word. Klein stroked her cheek, and said: "You don't recognize her? This is Selma!" She was Klein's second daughter. "My youngest child, Siegmund, died six years ago," Klein said, and bent his face over his plate. Selma opened her mouth and said, in a nasal voice: "Siegmund was sick!" She became excited, and Klein's sister spoke soothingly to her. The nasal voice went on: "I am sick, too!" With her round eyes, she looked unseeingly from one to the other. Klein put down his fork and petted her. Then, Moritz led the girl, very cautiously, out of the room. From behind the closed door, I could hear her screaming voice. Klein had grown pale; his eyes twitched and he fumbled with his fork. "She has had a fit!" he said. And the sister added: "She is an epileptic."

The servant brought in the next course, and a loud argument ensued. It broke off abruptly when the door opened and Blanka appeared, followed by Ignaz, who, without paying any attention to the others, touched my hand with slack fingers, sat down and silently began to eat. Blanka was now about twenty-three or twenty-four years old. She was not exactly slender; her cheeks and chin especially were somewhat too heavy, which gave her face, with its shining, blue-black hair, cut very short and mannish, the semblance of that of a Roman—a Roman man or woman. When she had seated herself, she gave me a long, appraising, calculating and somehow disrobing look out of her slightly protruding, but gloriously alive and humidly shimmering eyes. I observed her hands—slender, very white hands; hands of a noble yet disturbingly mobile suppleness. She hardly spoke, ate much, but not without grace, and often gazed sharply into my face, until Klein at last rose, shoved a cigar between my teeth, and—puffing himself—took me by the arm to show me the rest of the apartment.

We crossed through three rooms, darkened by arabesque-laden Turkish portières; rooms with tables, chairs, cabinets, chests, clocks and paintings of a confusing variety. Antique lamps stood in niches. Prayer rugs hung on the walls. The door-frame was adorned by a Biedermeier bell-pull. Klein said: "Investment! . . . A substantial investment! . . . Best values!" Then, he insisted on showing me the bath room. "Come along! Come along!" he said. But it so happened that the door was locked. "There is a second key," said Klein. He searched, found it, and unlocked the door. Beside the tub, in a wicker chair, sat a very slender, straw-blonde girl, with heavily rouged lips. Fräulein Blanka had told her to wait here, she said, somewhat offended, in answer to Klein's question. She could go, if necessary. Klein withdrew, annoyed and embarrassed at the same time, and we entered the dining room again from the corridor. Only Blanka was still there. Klein declared he was going to lie down for fifteen minutes, and Blanka invited me to come to her room.

I found a bright room, decorated in extremely modern taste, with unusually comfortable chairs and regiments of twisted cactus-plants, in big and little pots, on tables, taborets and window-sills. We stood in front of the graceful, well-filled bookcase, and a general conversation was about to develop, when Blanka, standing close to me, suddenly turned and, looking me straight in the eye, said: "I want you to meet a young lady!" She called the blonde, who came, stiff and still vexed over the encounter with Blanka's father. Blanka placed her plump arm placatingly around the girl's shoulders and, when she began to pout in a child-like manner, she brushed her half-open lips across the girl's ear and temple and suddenly, pulling her back into a chair, slid her slender, white hand down into the opening of the girl's dress. All this time, her shimmering eyes were unflinchingly fixed on mine. The other puckered her lips into a moue, glanced sideways at the tapestried wall and, still bent backwards, laid her left hand playfully and indifferently against the knee of Blanka, who, standing behind her, her eyes on mine, shivered convulsively. I went up to her and kissed her on the neck. She repulsed me gently. The blonde rose angrily and, stupid vanity in every look and gesture, said that she might as well go. Blanka followed her into the dressing-room adjacent, and they had a long argument, emphatic and quite serious in its protestations.

Then she came back into the room. "She left!" she said, with satiated eyes. "She feels insulted—I don't know why!" Then, in a quiet and monotonous voice, she added: "She'll be back! I keep her on short leash!" I attempted to kiss her, but she pulled away, firmly and as if she thought my effort strange. She passed over the incident with reproving emphasis, and began to talk about a translation of a Chinese book of philosophy lately published. She spoke in a caustic, discerning and critical manner, and as far as I was able to follow her, everything she said seemed to indicate a more than ordinary knowledge of the subject. Then, again, she suddenly asked: "Were you at the Exchange?" She inquired at great length about the possibilities of a certain stock. Why did she not go to her father for such information? The corners of her mouth twitched. "I do not discuss money matters with him," she said. She had already heard about the fall of the krone in London, and recommended Haindorfer copper. "Copper doesn't lose its value," she added. Together with the junior partner of Blankenburg, she had financed a shipment of a certain rubber article of which Rumanians are fond. "Non olet!" she explained, with a lascivious smile, and reached over my shoulder for a saffron-bound volume of Chinese poems. She read to me in a dusky voice, with enchanting restraint.

"I know where Abel met you!" she said, unexpectedly. "Do you still sometimes go to the old house?" I shook my head in denial. She nodded, soberly. "I know," she said. "Once out of the muck, one runs, and one does not turn back. We run with fear on our neck!" Her shimmering eyes were on mine, and when I reached for her, she pressed close, knowingly and without prudery, against my body. The telephone rang in the next room. She freed herself, dispassionately, and I heard her energetically refusing some one's plea, apparently for money. She returned. It had been the blonde, she declared, breathing audibly, hard of face and tense with agitation. Some one called me. I went into the drawing-room.

There I found Klein, in the company of the Frenchman with the decayed teeth, whose name was Ducrède. Then, there was De Letter, who stretched both hands toward me in exaggerated welcome; his wife, an immense, richly dressed lady, with short hair and a gold lorgnette; Frau Popper, the wife of the banker, and a fat, saccharine gentleman of about forty, in whom I was at last privileged to meet Farkas—the famous Farkas—owner and editor of *Truth.* They were at that moment speaking of Schweizer-Glass, and every question was a trap; but Klein, for whom these traps were set, remained evasive, even when pretty Frau Popper, intoxicatingly scented, pulled him playfully but insistently into a corner. For a moment, I stood alone with Farkas. In a voice inaudible to the others, he said: "You are Abel's representative, are you not?" I nodded. He blew the smoke of his cigar into my face and whispered, with smiling teeth: "I must talk to you! You can make some money! Come to my office, tomorrow, at noon. Tell the man at the desk—" He broke off abruptly as Klein began showing his guests through the apartment, quoting the price of each article he indicated for their attention.

As they were passing through the music-room, Ruben Feuerbach entered through a side-door, followed by Ignaz. Young Klein's face immediately became hostile, and for a moment it seemed as though he meant to draw his friend out of the room. But Ruben, with his beautiful, vacant smile, crossed over to the group of obvious strangers and offered each of them his hand, without introducing himself, as custom required. He greeted me in a friendly manner, and it seemed to me as though there were a change in the expression of his features: his lips were restless and the pupils of his eyes were curiously enlarged. He went into the corridor, accompanied by Ignaz. When, hastily taking my leave, I followed the two, they had already left the apartment. I took my hat and coat and hurried after them—I do not know why, but I could not forget the incident at Rafael Meier's and the meeting with Mirjam Feuerbach at Calé's. Yet, an inexplicable diffidence kept me from approaching the boy and talking with him.

When I left the house, I saw the two hurrying away on the opposite side of the street. I followed them, and soon realized that their way led to the suburb. They turned to the right, walked through an interminable, noisy street, and then to the left, into the more quiet one where the old house stood. At the entrance, Ruben said good-by; but after Ignaz had entered the archway, he crossed the street and dallied for four or five minutes before the window of a perfumery shop, studying his features in a mirror with an open yet singularly detached smile. Then, he strolled back to the street-car which would take him to his home

I went into the house and walked through to the courtyard. There was not a sign of Ignaz. The natural place to look for him was at Rafael Meier's. I went over to the staircase in the corner and, to my surprise, encountered Mirjam, who was just then coming down the stairs. She started, and for a moment it seemed as though she were about to pass me. But then, she must have changed her mind; she turned, and offered me her hand in greeting. "We haven't seen each other for a long time!" she said, quietly. And then, abruptly: "What do you want of me?" And again: "You want something of me! You are spying on me!" I asked, sharply: "What are you doing here? Where have you been?" She struggled against her sudden anger, controlled herself, and decided to answer. Leaning against the door-post, she said, with twitching lips: "I have to visit some one here. Twice a week, I come here to visit some one." After a pause, she added: "Does that satisfy you?" She turned to go: "Besides, there is a sick man in the basement—the shoemaker. Influenza. I must still visit him!"

I would not let her go. "Are you a private nurse?" I asked. "A visiting nurse," she answered, "from the Association of Voluntary Nurses, for the sick who cannot pay. We get our meals, and nothing else." Again she nodded and tried to pass me. I did not move from her path. "You get no pay?" I asked. "No money," she replied. "Formerly, I was in a hospital. That was better. Then, we were discharged; and after that . . ." she paused ". . . . after that—many things. . . ." Her hand fluttered in the air. "Many things!" she repeated. "They brought me from the front in the dysentery train. I could hardly stand when they discharged me from the hospital—I was just about able to breathe. At home? 'Be quiet, child! Rest, child! Go to bed, child—you are still weak! Eat, child, eat! Have some wine! Eat some meat!' And then, I discovered that there was not even bread in the house. I got up and looked for work. But what could one do? What did I know how to do? Nothing. I could nurse the sick—yes. But there were two hundred thousand nurses unemployed after the war. What, then?" She paused, and her hand fluttered in the air. "I tried many things," she said. "I was a typist, but my lungs became affected. That is why I cannot nurse children. I was street-car conductress. Oh, yes! And I sold carpet-sweepers!" Her gaze was staring out far away. "I worked in a lamp-shade factory, sewing lampshades. I have sold newspapers." With her open hand, she brushed the visions away from before her eyes. Then, she smiled, in perfect self-control: "But that is all as it should be. No one gives you anything for nothing. What was I saying? Oh, yes—I am a visiting nurse. It is just another road within the circle. There was nothing else to be had."

"If you earn no money," I said, "where does the money come from that you give them at home?" She flushed furiously, leaned against the door-post, and looked into my eyes, without answering. I asked again: "Where?" There must have been something in my voice that made her answer me. Very distinctly, she said: "That must be earned!" I asked: "How?" She controlled herself; then, she said, with a sweeping gesture: "Sometimes it is not easy!" I felt the blood rising to my brain. "How?" I demanded. Then, she replied, with quivering lips, not taking her eyes from mine: "Sometimes—when there is no money—" She broke off. "Oh, you know!" she said, weakly. We were silent. I lowered my eyes before her look. She nodded, and again tried to pass me. "Mirjam!" I said, softly. She turned her head. "Whom did you visit here, Mirjam?" I asked, in a low voice. She smiled faintly. "My child. It is with Frau Meier. It is a boy—two years old, now." And, still smiling: "It is not easy to manage these visits. No one knows about the child—not even my mother." We were silent. "I must go now," she said, after a pause. I stepped aside.

I must have remained standing there for a long time. When, finally, I went up to Rafael Meier's to ask for Ignaz—I did it just to be doing something—night was falling. No, Ignaz Klein was not there, said the occultist, in his sonorous voice. Had not been there in some days. "He is the victim of many sore trials within himself," said Herr Meier. "He has not yet seen the light." Then, he asked: "Do you know his sister? Fräulein Blanka Klein has done me the honor of asking me to come and see her. Some one has spoken of me to her. She is thinking of having a gathering of theosophists once a week." Then, he added: "The Kleins have lots of money, haven't they? I understand her father is a magnate on the Stock Exchange. And you are connected with him, if I am not mistaken." I took my leave. He went with me to the stairs, while from one of the rooms, faint, wailing voices followed us. "Ignaz never has any money," he said; and he called after me down the stairs: "What do you think of Polish marks?"

When I crossed the dark courtyard, I heard some one sobbing in the shoemaker's room. The window was open. A woman sat at the table, her head buried in her arms. Her body shook. Beside her crouched a quiet child. At the head of the bed stood Mirjam, lighting four candles on the nightstand. It was at this time that the Spanish influenza began its desolating course—an unknown plague, attacking suddenly and in various ways; a plague which many said was nothing but a kind of lung infection. I stopped in at the lodging-place and went to Anton's room. The door was locked. I heard many footsteps passing up and down the stairs next door. Badele lived there. As I walked through the archway into the street, I heard, far in the rear, from an unlighted, open window, Frau Gutjahr's dry cough.

My encounter with Mirjam, as well as an incident which occurred on the following morning, was instrumental in again tightening the ties that bound me to the Feuerbach family. I have mentioned how Farkas, the editor of *Truth*, invited me to call on him. Even though I had not met this Farkas until that night at Klein's, I knew much about him. He had come originally from Budapest; had been connected with a bank; had, one day, for reasons unknown, been summarily dismissed, and had thereupon joined the staff of a newspaper, in which position he had created an unpleasant impression by unscrupulously employing journalistic information as a means of lining his own pockets. He was given to understand that, if he had a special talent for such plundering expeditions, the profits gained thereby should rightfully go to the paper employing him. The dispute was still in progress when—having become cognizant by accident and the bribing of a servant of the very painful secret of some influential people—he was peremptorily arrested. He escaped by means of a bribe and, with a reward on his head, took refuge in the capital of the neighboring state, where he posed as a political exile.

His compatriots, who lived here as emigrants—idealists, descendants of Kossuth and politically without guile—he fleeced first of all. The money he took from them for the express purpose of establishing a Hungarian newspaper, he used, with the exception of those amounts he lost on the market and at the gaming table, for the promotion of the *Midnight Post*, a weekly, the financial success of which he assured by the simple method of snooping around and discovering weekly the bedroom secrets of three or four wealthy men. At an insignificant expense, in very small edition, these secrets would be printed; and on the day previous to the supposedly official publication, Farkas would go to his victims, with a copy of the paper in his pocket. After a conversation, usually very brief, that varied little in its uniformity, he would invariably soften under the pleas of his victims. Oh, he took no bribes. But each one, and this was no more than fair, naturally had to buy the entire edition—according to Farkas, a large one, and now ready for circulation—if it was to be suppressed. And that the grateful victim, spared the horrors of scandal, would also contract for some sort of advertisement, to be run indefinitely in this paper, was a matter of course.

But all this already belonged to the past at the time I met Farkas. Farkas, wealthy within a year, had sold the *Midnight Post* to a certain Herr Wernicke, of Hannover, and had started *Truth*, an afternoon paper, which, while not above erotic disclosures, existed mainly through its indefatigable opposition to the capitalistic powers, at the same time reporting all meetings of Boards of Directors and the proposed policy of the capitalistic powers, enhancing its popularity by a puzzle page, illustrations of all kinds, and the verdicts of a caustically humorous and unscrupulous theater critic. The business which Farkas formerly had been able to discharge in his two-room apartment was now executed in pretentious offices, with a staff of journalists and office workers at his beck and call; and at this time he was taking advantage of the influence of his paper and his commercial success to gain a foothold in society. He attended balls; he used perfume; an aristocratic girl of a prominent family was his secretary—and more; and it was usually not hard to persuade the capitalists to take him on the board of this or that organization.

But if I was under the impression that his invitation had something to do with an ambition of that sort—he still had five hundred shares of Abel stock at the price of issue—I soon found myself disillusioned. My interview with this man was brief and to the point. When I arrived, I found the anteroom filled with waiting people. I gave my name, and two minutes later was ushered through a side door into Farkas's office.

Smiling, he moved a chair close to his desk, sat down himself and, suddenly losing all trace of amiability, plunged into the subject: "So you are the secretary—or representative. And you say you want to make some money." "That is not true!" I replied. "You told me you want to bribe me." He raised his open hand toward me, and protested: "Stop! We'll never get anywhere, this way. Let us come to the point. We are among ourselves. Something stinks in your firm. I want to find out what it is." I said: "When one stands in a stench, one doesn't smell it." "Funny, aren't you?" he said. "If you don't smell it, it's because you don't want to!" And I: "Am I supposed to guess what you want? Ask me!" "You're a smart fellow!" he laughed. "Now, you're cross-questioning me. But don't spoil the deal for yourself. Who pays—you or I?" I said: "I haven't heard a word about pay. Tell me what you want to know and what you're willing to spend. You buy—I sell." "You're a crook!" he cried. "I don't pay cash—not if you burst! We've got to trust each other. After all, I am a gentleman. If I make money, you will make money. There's something fishy about this increase of the capitalization of the Abel Works. The company controls eighty-four percent of the stock. Paid-in capital? I laugh! And still, they want an increase? Only because the floating sixteen percent is at a premium? That stinks! I want to know the inside. Abel and Klein—one is a bigger crook than the other. Oh, well, I see you don't know anything. Go home and keep your ears open. When you find out something, come back to me."

He got up. "I need some people for the puzzle department," he said. "If you know of two or three good-looking girls"—he smirked—"even though I'm somewhat overworked—" He continued: "What is this about Birkmeier's daughter and Count Warre? Why does Birkmeier need this connection with the Nationalists? As it is, his son is profiteering with Ducrède and the Inter-Allied commission! Oh, well, you don't know anything!" And, continuing: "A certain Feuerstein, or Feuerbach, is pestering me to death. Writer of some kind. What do I need him for? But he is supposed to be an old acquaintance of Abel's and Klein's. Do you know him? I don't like him, but I treat him well. He may know something." And then, abruptly: "Will you come in on a put-and-call deal of ten thousand laurahütte at the present price? May call. Sugar, I tell you! . . . If you hear anything with regard to Birkmeier, let me know. What about this Schweizer-Glass business? It's just as rotten as that increase of capitalization. You can't fool me! . . . Don't forget the darlings for my puzzles. Good-by!"

In front of the building I met Feuerbach, who was on his way to see Farkas. He was negotiating with Farkas for a position, he said, excited and in high spirits. "I just come from there," I said, and something made me add that Farkas was out. "Again!" he said. Then, with forced gayety: "That doesn't matter. I'll come back to-morrow. They want me, that is certain. They know who I am. I will put into decent German what the reporters bring in." In the comparatively short time since our last meeting, he had changed so terribly that I was almost shocked. He seemed to have aged horribly, and was indeed now an old man, but with it all he possessed the lightness of spirit of those who have soared beyond the peak of an inner mountain and are now floating free. He linked his arm in mine, with a gesture of boyish camaraderie which only with difficulty covered the uncertainty of his hesitant steps—the steps of a man nearly blind.

I took him home. Volubly, he insisted on my coming up with him, and he seemed rather pitifully eager to have me see a certain improvement in his manner of living. The overcrowded living room had indeed altered, inasmuch as an obviously new cover was spread over the center table, bright curtains now hung before the windows, and here and there a bunch of flowers, a little picture on the wall and a freshly painted book-shelf showed unmistakably the willingness of a somewhat handicapped hand. Feuerbach threw his hat on the table, dropped into an armchair, made a sweeping gesture across the room, and laughed softly. "Things are a little better now," he said; and added, from behind his hand, in a hushed yet clear voice, as though confiding a joyous secret: "Mirjam is making money!" Frau Feuerbach came into the room and sat down next to him, tired of face, and looked at me with unseeing eyes. Yes, Mirjam was making money, Feuerbach continued. For the last couple of weeks, she had been with a tubercular gentleman. "And besides that, he is paralyzed," said Feuerbach. "People sometimes live like that for years." He placed his hand on the arm of the woman and, in silent contentment, stroked her hand with gentle tenderness.

Frau Feuerbach was silent. She looked up only when Ruben came in from the next room and crossed to the outer door. "Where are you going?" she asked. Ruben turned on the threshold, and smiled. "Friends!" he said. I could see plainly now that the expression of his eyes had changed. Frau Feuerbach, sharp and impatient, insisted: "Friends! Whom?" Ruben's face suddenly grew blank, and Feuerbach raised his hand with a placating smile. "Why are you so irritable?" he asked, and added gently: "Come, Ruben, my child!" Ruben went to him, with an uncertain expression, and kissed him on the cheek. Then, he flushed violently and went out. "You shouldn't be so severe with Ruben," said Feuerbach, when the door had closed behind him. Frau Feuerbach said nothing.

She held her work-roughened hands folded on her knees and sat there resting and at the same time darkly brooding, while Feuerbach spoke eagerly of starting on a new literary work, in which he would—as far as I could make out—introduce Beethoven's symphonic technique into the field of writing. "The spring is flowing again," said Feuerbach, and he smiled contentedly.

Outside, the door opened and closed, and Mirjam entered. She nodded in my direction, went up to Feuerbach, and kissed his cheek. She was breathless, as though she had been running. She exchanged a look with her mother. I saw a silent question there, and here a quick nod. Frau Feuerbach rose, reached for Mirjam's hand-bag, which she had placed on the table, and said: "I am going. To-day is Thursday. I have to stand in line for meat." Feuerbach refused to let her go. "You can always get what you need without doing that," he said. Resigned, the woman sat down again and did not answer. He continued: "Money isn't worth anything, any more! A cigar now costs a hundred kronen!" The truth was that even the cheapest cigar was many times that amount, and I was about to tell him so when Mirjam raised her hand in silent entreaty, and I stopped in time. Feuerbach said that he would go a little ways with me for a walk, if I would wait while he took off his good suit. Waving his hand at me in friendly familiarity—and bumping against two chairs that happened to be in his way—he left the room.

Frau Feuerbach rose and said dully: "I am going. To-day is Thursday. I have to stand in line for meat." Mirjam remained, and when the door closed behind her mother, we sat silently for many minutes. Then, it seemed that Mirjam's self-control suddenly snapped, and across many unspoken words she said: "Do you know of some work for me?" I asked: "What kind of work?" and the next moment, I blushed like a child. She looked beyond me, and replied: "Any kind! I can't go on! I can't go on!" And once again: "I can't go on! Everybody lies—I, Mother! Everything lies—these curtains, the pictures on the wall! The doctor says Father must have no excitement. So we are all play-acting." She brushed her hand across her forehead; her agitation subsided, and she said, with a smile: "Our whole era is play-acting!" And then, as though endeavoring again to withdraw behind the walls of her self-control, she began casually to tell me that now everything would be easier, for her father had an opportunity of getting a position with *Truth*. "As soon as he has work and is not at home all day, we will be able to manage better. And then, I will be so glad!" she said, and smiled again. We were standing side by side at the window. I told her, in detail, about my conversation with Farkas. Mirjam stood silent and gazed through the window. Then she said, slowly, "His name is Farkas?" I observed her face in profile, watched indescribable expressions pursuing one another, and saw indecision slowly settle into stubborn determination. Faintly alarmed, I asked: "Mirjam! What are you going to do?" She closed her eyes, and for a long moment leaned her cheek against my shoulder. Then Feuerbach returned, slapped me on the back, and laughed jovially. Arm in arm, we went down the stairs.

THEN the wave once more carried me far along, and when, a week later, I accidentally learned that Feuerbach had been engaged by Farkas after all, I was so taken up with other matters that I hardly gave it a thought. Ever since my interview with the newspaper editor, I had tried harder than ever to uncover the whys and wherefores of all Klein's and Abel's activities. And what I now discovered and understood was indeed a revelation that showed me many things in a different light.

First of all, Samuel Klein's indefatigable inventive genius and obstinate daring astounded me. After that little raid on the Stock Exchange—Schweizer-Glass, by the way, was in demand since then—Klein's endeavor was to cover once and for all the daily growing need of francs—on account of the purchase of De Letter's canned meats—by an easy and reliable method. Since it became more and more difficult to deal in foreign securities, and since the quota allotted by the Central Bureau was worse than inadequate and entirely undependable, Klein, instead of buying foreign money in Vienna, hit upon the idea of selling kronen in various foreign places. He succeeded the better because, so as not to come into conflict with the Government, he sold only to tried and reliable friends in other countries. When Klein presented these kronen-drafts for approval, he had at his disposal the equivalents in francs, marks and pounds in Paris, Berlin and London, thus eliminating all middlemen and official red-tape. This simple expedient—prohibited by reason of the continuing fall of the krone—was covered over by false invoices which proved to the controlling authorities the need of all these amounts for the settlement of merchandise allegedly received. The immense invoices in francs of the De Letter deliveries, officially changed into kronen, were alone sufficient to cover any amount applied for. After Klein had succeeded in doing this, he took the final step and raised the necessary money for the payment of these kronen-drafts by ordering the newly opened foreign branches, two at a time, to cover the investment and credit accorded them by the Abel Works by exchanging drafts in that amount, with the understanding that he would not discount these drafts. Regardless of this promise, they were put into circulation and cashed at the smaller and less informed banks.

In this manner, the great transaction was safeguarded on every side. Money was being made without money; Klein reached into the air and—demoniacal conjurer!—placed clinking gold upon the table; ten, a hundred, a thousand threads were held in his hand, and when he gave the sign, the money flowed into the treasury of the Abel Works. The little man went around with red blotches on his face, always slightly feverish; and what drove him, the driver, steadily on was not so much greed for money, not so much the fascination of the game that, once started, could not be stopped, but rather something else—something that had been secretly eating into him for years, and which now, in the day of his rapid ascent to dizzy heights, became more and more apparent . . .

It was his hatred of Abel. Of Abel, who, when he was in need, had thrown him a scrap, as one does to a dog. Of Abel, who now, without toil, thanks or even thought, raked in the gold magically realized through his—Klein's—instinctive genius. Of Abel, the fundamental stranger, the alien, of the alien race. And not his thoughts, but rather a dark, mysterious urge drove him on, compelling him to rise up against Abel, as the Jewish Moses had risen against Pharaoh.

All this came to my knowledge now, and confirmed Farkas's sagacity, he partly knowing and partly surmising the true condition of affairs. The long contemplated increase of capitalization was in fact to be Klein's weapon in realizing his intentions.

At the time that the Abel Works had been changed, at an opportune moment, into an A.G.*—in order to save the cost of incorporating and to escape the time-consuming red-tape of officialdom—the charter of a company, promoted at the end of the war by a number of former dignitaries of the Court and Army generals, and which soon withered under the inefficiency of such officers—had been acquired for little money, and the Abel factory had been clothed in this empty stock company cloak, listing its assets at a ridiculously low value. As the fall of the krone from day to day made an increase of capitalization more necessary, especially as the Abel stock had thus far not been admitted to the Exchange, and because eighty-four percent of the stock, listed under fictitious names, in reality belonged to the company, Abel and Klein had to be prepared to take over a great number of the new shares themselves and to pay cash for them into their own treasury. Then, Klein conceived the idea of not paying for these new shares with money, but with merchandise; which meant that he who had to take over these shares officially sold, at the same time and for the same amount, certain merchandise to the company—a transaction easily negotiated, as the so-called buyer of the shares was also the seller of the merchandise: indeed, the company itself. All that was now necessary was to find such merchandise as the Abel Works might sell to the Abel Works. And at exactly this point, in the intricacy of this transaction so complicated and so difficult to understand,

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* Joint stock company.

Klein purposed to lay the trap in which Johannes Abel was presently to be caught.

He fully realized that he could not injure his still unsuspecting enemy except by involving him in some sort of transaction that, should it become public, would be criminal in the eyes of the law. If he succeeded in this design, he would have the mightiest of all allies on his side—an ally which he need not even call upon, since a casual hint would be sufficient to bring to terms the by then guilty Abel. And while they—Klein included—had until now merely straddled the boundary of the law, prepared at any time to leap from danger into the safe realm of innocence—here at last, in this sale of merchandise by the Abel Works to the Abel Works—in this transaction, which Abel, as President and principal stockholder, would be charged with personally, and which in the eyes of the law was nothing but flagrant fraud—he perceived the means of getting the hated man into his power.

Moreover, he found it a surprisingly simple matter to secure consent to this transaction from Abel, who indeed hardly listened to the recital of his plan; and now, in order to complete the enveloping net, it was only necessary to find the merchandise that—to make the fraud sufficiently glaring—could be sold by Abel to his own company at an exorbitant price. Abel, seeing the personal advantage in the scheme and still unsuspecting, was agreeable even to this proposition, giving Klein, the gambler, yet another trump in his hand. Offer upon offer was piled on his desk, but he did not find what he wanted.

Then, one day, Geza Balogh came into my office, seated himself opposite me without even a greeting, thrust his ivory tooth-pick between his teeth, and pulled a long paper-box out of his pocket. He broke the seal with a highly polished, pointed thumb-nail and offered me a cigarette. "Smoke one!" he said. I thanked him and refused, but he was insistent: "Smoke one!" I accepted one of the long, narrow cigarettes and lighted it. The smoke was acrid and disgusting to the taste. I scrutinized the cigarette, and saw the printed name of a cheap brand; but otherwise it was of an absolutely legitimate and genuine appearance. "What is it?" I asked. Balogh leaned back in his chair. "The biggest business the world has ever seen!" he answered. It must be explained that this Geza Balogh, a little Hungarian agent with numerous offspring, from early morning until late at night on the hunt for bread, loved to give his business propositions a certain dramatic flavor. Without comment, I threw the cigarette out of the window and began to write. Becoming more serious, Balogh said: "Listen! There are a hundred and twenty-two million of these cigarettes!" "But they are ruined!" I replied. "Ruined?" he said. "They aren't even cigarettes! They are moldy. They're full of moth. The tobacco is dust. But the wrappers—the wrappers are perfect. And the packing is perfect. And the whole lot costs only a hundred and twenty-two millions. One krone for each cigarette! While the cheapest, at retail, costs to-day a hundred and fifty each!" I went to Klein. He thought for a long time. Then, he closeted himself with Balogh.

The result was that Klein bought the cigarettes in Abel's name for a hundred and twenty-two million. And Abel, the shareholder, paid for the new shares that he was obliged to take over by selling these cigarettes to the Abel Works for ten times the cost—1,220,000,000 kronen was what he charged for them. After all, the cigarettes were in an Italian port; they lay there exempt of duty; the wrappers and packing were in order; there was no mention of any damage to the merchandise on the invoice, and consequently, the price of ten kronen a cigarette, which the Abel Works paid to Johannes Abel, was still very low. The shares were fully paid for; the increase of capitalization was accomplished; the Abel Works owned a huge stock of cigarettes in Italy—Abel slapped Klein on the shoulder with a heavy hand, and laughed; and Klein was pale, as usual, and now he held the last trump in his hand. This was fraud. Abel was a swindler. Klein now waited for the moment to tell him so, to show him that he now held the whip-hand; and nothing can more clearly indicate the driving forces at work in the man than the fact that this frail and fundamentally reticent Jew did not for a moment hesitate to expose himself to considerable personal danger as the instigator of the entire transaction.

But things turned out differently. Klein, playing his waiting game, employed his time for a playful, calculated tightening of the net. But when, one day, he demanded of Balogh, who had been put off with a small commission, a second, fictitious invoice for his own dark purpose, this harassed man, tormented by small worries and beholding huge sums realized through his suggestion, fell into a sudden, insane rage, demanded money as his share, shouted, threatened, and at last had to be put out of the office. It was purely by accident that he met Abel on the stairs; and Balogh, who under ordinary circumstances hardly would have presumed to address Abel, pulled him aside and began talking to him. Abel listened, startled. He understood—understood first of all, without the slightest suspicion that he was the object of an attack, that the whole transaction was too dangerous. At least, too dangerous to let stand as was, without retrenching and opening up a line of retreat. He took out his wallet and gave Balogh some money. The man seized it, fawned upon him, and disappeared. Abel stepped into Klein's office and laughingly related the incident to his paling partner. "We are risking too much!" he said. "It must be straightened out. I'll take care of it." So saying, he went away. Klein said not a word. Abel had slipped through the meshes. Abel was out of danger, without even knowing that there had been danger. Abel was the victor. He had not even received a scratch. Abel was on top.

He was indeed on top. He discovered that the aristocrats and former generals had been guilty of certain trivial, amateurish irregularities with respect to certain laws at the time of promoting the little A. G. which had by now become too small for the Abel Works to use as a cloak. So he gave De Letter a sham option on a hundred thousand shares of the new issue at a very high figure. The next day, he had De Letter write him a note: he, De Letter, could not take up the option and had to refuse to go through with the deal, as he had discovered the irregularities of which the original founders had been guilty, and feared future consequences. By virtue of this letter, Abel was able to hold the former owners jointly liable for the pretended loss he had sustained by the cancellation of this contract, and it needed only two letters and a threat of prosecution plus open scandal to bring them all—generals, owners of big estates, ecclesiastics and uncrowned aristocrats—to terms. They came and paid—paid an indemnity of some 1,150,000,000 kronen in cash into the treasury of the Abel Works—and the increase of capitalization was now really accomplished with real money.

So now there remained only the cigarettes. Abel sold them for six hundred and twenty million to a real estate broker who had secured a mortgage of four billion kronen on behalf of the young Count Chambord and did not wish to give him more than two billion five hundred million. Instead of the last 1,500,000,000 kronen, the young Count Chambord had to content himself with a hundred and twenty-two million cigarettes. And so every detail was taken care of.

Oh, one had but to reach into the air, and one had money between one's fingers. And only the worry of again putting it into proper circulation remained. It must be said of Abel that he well understood this difficult art. If in his younger years he had at times plunged himself into methodical dissipation, now that his hair was white and his money continued to pile up—and having no relative since Ulrich's death—dissipation became with him even more deliberate and purposeful. "No one is going to inherit my money!" he often said. Enjoyment of the moderate, inexpensive pleasures of life was denied him who had never been poor. Occasionally, he arranged a party for his friends, and also for people hardly known to him—a party like the one in the house of Calé, which I had witnessed. Then, surrounded by women, with their anxious greed for money, he would remain sober for hours, until finally he would start drinking, and drink until he was senselessly drunk. And as for women—he, the rich man who had never found it necessary to repress his desires, cared the less for them because the delicate and gossamer-like mantle hovering about the sexual relationship had always remained alien to his brutal clutch. Women had never been anything to him but merchandise for which he paid his money. And it was just about the time of which we are speaking here that he gradually lost his pleasure for this sort of commerce. Many evenings and late into the night he sat in his office, poring over the books. Money piled upon money, and figures would be added to figures. When he succeeded in a manœuvre such as the one by which he had made the aristocrats pay for the increase of capitalization, he would feel a sort of pallid satisfaction. Then, he would go home and go to sleep in his large, empty house, in his huge bed, or he would go for a walk in the open, across the green meadows, and decapitate the flowers with his walking-stick. But then again it might easily happen that the very next day he would arrange one of his wild parties in Fräulein Calé's apartment, and be brought home at the break of day, hopelessly drunk.

It is scant wonder that Samuel Klein, knowing the dissipations of the man he secretly hated, had no idea of his satiety. Johannes Abel was to him a senseless spendthrift, a human beast, differing from a ruttish dog only by his brain. And when, one time, entering Abel's office unannounced, he saw a very young stenographer jump up with disheveled hair and disarranged dress, the plan of a new attack ripened in his mind. Never really having had anything to do with women, he nevertheless knew of their influence over men by hearsay and by simple logic. It was this influence that he now proposed to use. He called me into his office—I was his confidant at the time—took a piece of paper and a pencil and, as if it were merely a business deal, proceeded to confer with me. "He is quite blind, when his passions are aroused," he said. "A woman could turn him around her little finger. Now, if we can find the right one, we won't see him here at all, any more. We must find one who will let him take her to the Riviera, or to Constantinople, or to India." We both smiled at the romanticism of such a proposal. But immediately Klein grew serious again. The corners of his mouth twitching nervously, he asked: "Don't you know of one? We must find a woman for him!" He persisted in this idea. I laughed and left him.

Three or four days later, I found him in his office, engrossed in earnest conversation with Gutjahr. When I entered, the latter rose, grinned and departed. Long afterwards, when the whole conspiracy was brought to light, it was discovered that Klein had called Gutjahr to him by means of a postal card—the devil only knows why he should have thought of him—and told him bluntly what he wanted. He gave him money, and promised him double the amount if he should really succeed in interesting Abel in the female that Gutjahr should procure. Klein concluded: "If you don't keep your mouth shut about this—! But you will! If you talk too much, they will believe me, not you. They will believe me when I tell them that you are a pimp. Talk, and you'll go to jail!" Gutjahr grinned. He had his information. He understood. So he left when I entered—without the slightest intention of acceding to Klein's request, but determined to use this incident merely for the purpose of securing occasional advances of money. "That Jew knows nothing about women! That Jew is blind!" he said to himself, as he walked down the stairs. And at that moment, in the office upstairs, Klein, with a pale smile, was whispering into my ear: "I'm getting on!" There were deep circles under his eyes. He was worried, he said. Selma was worse. "One works and works, without object or reason!" he said. Then, he quarreled with an agent over the telephone.

NEVERTHELESS, Klein's conversation with Gutjahr had quite a serious consequence. It so happened that, in a momentary lapse from his habitual reticence, Gutjahr, returning home, highly amused by the interview, had told his mother of Klein's extraordinary request and intention. The woman at once demanded part of the money for her own needs—a demand undoubtedly inspired more by her insane greed than by necessity, for, despite her voluble protestations to the contrary, rumor insisted that she secretly possessed more than she could ever spend. The growing poverty of the people, not alone in the house but in the entire quarter, gave her a welcome opportunity once more to emphasize her own supposed need. It was at that horrible, frenzied time when the prices of everything soared hourly, and not a week went by but that some one died in the old house. After the shoemaker whose eyes Mirjam had closed, three babies, one after another, died at Frau Meier's. Then, the wife of the lace-maker on the third floor died of consumption; then, one of Calé's "ladies" succumbed to the Spanish influenza. It was likewise influenza that took the chemist Wokurka; next, it was the sixteen-year-old daughter of the lace-maker, the blonde with the braids, who toppled over one night, it was never quite clear from what, while waiting in line before the coal-distributing station. Then, one of the lodgers in my former asylum; the ambulance doctor said he had died of starvation. The death of the lace-maker himself can hardly be counted, for it was never determined whether he had fallen out of the window during a sudden attack of dizziness or had deliberately jumped to the flagging of the courtyard below. These deaths made room for the others. Now, they could breathe. Air, air, air poured into the musty chambers.

Yes, the Gutjahr woman wanted money; and when her son refused to give it to her and, vilely cursing her, slammed the door behind him as he left, the paralyzed woman raved in her bed for an hour. Then she wrote a post-card (which was found later) to Frau Feuerbach: "I have been waiting four weeks now. Why don't you come? I have some fine news about your A—— and something else." This card was posted by one of Calé's girls, Frau Gutjahr having beckoned to her from the window. When Frau Feuerbach received it next day at the luncheon table, she grew pale, rose silently and locked herself in the bedroom. She was determined not to obey the summons. But, an hour later, obedient, she boarded the street-car.

The old woman received her in the worst of humor. Without acknowledging the greeting of her visitor, the paralytic cried: "Well! At last! You haven't taken any notice of me in three months!" Frau Feuerbach did not answer, and the old woman immediately proceeded to divulge her news. Warping the truth, embellishing the facts, at great length and with fiendish enjoyment, she told of Johannes Abel, the libertine, scouring the city for women and more women, interspersing her recital with ejaculations of smut and bestiality. Frau Feuerbach, relieved and weary, hardly listened to what the old harpy was saying. She stood leaning against the door and, suddenly recalling the reason of her visit, exclaimed: "Frau Gutjahr! You are commencing to send me post-cards! That won't do!" This angered the old woman. "I suppose I must handle you with kid gloves!" she shouted. "I should send a registered letter to the fine lady—she wants no less than that!" Frau Feuerbach, still standing near the door, answered quietly: "No! Neither letter nor card, Frau Gutjahr! Nothing at all!" But the crippled woman was not to be intimidated. "Very well!" she cried. "We will let your husband read them, and find out about everything at last!"

Frau Feuerbach leaned a little more heavily against the door. She was very pale, but she controlled herself. She crossed the room and, seating herself at the head of the bed, said very, very calmly: "No! Not that! Woman, listen to me! I came here to talk with you, for this must come to an end. You know something about me—or about Ruben, if you prefer. Or you *think* you know something . . ." "*Think!*" the old woman interrupted, and laughed shrilly. Frau Feuerbach raised her hand and continued, still very calmly: "No! Let me speak! What you know, or believe you know, is nineteen years old. You have demanded money—you have received money. You intruded yourself into my house—I did not desire it, but you forced me to accept you. . . ." Frau Gutjahr laughed shrilly: "Why didn't you have me arrested for blackmail? All you had to do was tell your husband the whole story about your bastard!"

Frau Feuerbach sat very stiff, very pale. Then, with terrible calm, she said: "Woman! All that happened a long time ago. Then, perhaps, it might still have been possible to tell him—but no, not that! Woman, listen to me! Again and again, you have demanded money of me. I have stolen it from my husband. I have stolen it from the mouths of my children, and brought it to you. Now, there is no more. You ask why I have not been to see you in three months? Because there is no more—no more, woman! Nothing! Nothing!" The Gutjahr woman laughed. Dreadfully calm, Frau Feuerbach continued: "Listen to me! I came to-day, woman, because I want to plead with you. Do not ask for any more. Please!" The Gutjahr woman bleated: "All you would have to do is tell your husband about it *now!*" Frau Feuerbach—oh, she controlled herself!—remained dreadfully calm: "No! At that time—yes. Woman, listen to me! You are yourself a mother. I have come to plead with you. Try to understand! Once, I might have told. But then, the child came, and my husband loved it . . . he loved it so very much! . . . His whole life became involved in his love for the child. And to tell him now? It were better if I had done so—yes. But, woman! Now? He is an old man now! He has heart trouble, and is feeble—so feeble! Now, he only lives for—but what is the use of talking? Woman! I ask you—will you leave me in peace?"

The Gutjahr woman snickered evilly. Frau Feuerbach—oh, she controlled herself!—horribly calm, rose and took a silver snuff-box out of her bag. "Woman, listen to me!" she said, holding on to herself and struggling against her emotion and to keep her teeth from chattering. "Listen to me, woman! There is no money! But here is a snuff-box. My husband never uses it—he cannot have tobacco in any form any more, so he will never know it is gone—he will never look for it." She paused. "It is of Russian workmanship, chased silver," she said in a faltering voice, and, with trembling fingers, offered the little trinket to the paralytic. But the old woman, in a sudden paroxysm of rage, screeched viciously: "To hell with it! I don't need anything from you! Here!—Here!—Here!"—and she thumped the mattress repeatedly with her fist—"Here, here is money! Sewed in here, you poor fool, is more money than you will ever see in one pile! That junk there"—she struck viciously against the hand of the woman, so that the trinket flew across the room into a corner—"you couldn't even give me that junk!" Then, in a frenzy, losing all restraint: "She still wears a hat! She must still wear a hat, when she goes out on the street! 'Madam!' they call her, even if she can't buy herself an undershirt. 'Madam!'—you! You still look just like you did that time—that evening, when you came home and Abel took you gently by the hand and pulled you into his apartment!"

Frau Feuerbach stood there, frozen, a deep flush mounting her cheeks. She said, with difficulty: "Nineteen years ago, woman!" She felt herself slipping beyond control. "Nineteen years ago! . . . You spied through the keyhole, you—!" The Gutjahr woman screamed out her hate: "Yes, yes! I spied! He tore the blouse off you, Abel did! He threw you on the bed, he did!" Frau Feuerbach stood there, frozen. Oh, she felt herself slipping beyond control. "I was forced!" she said, between clenched teeth. But the crippled woman screeched: "Forced, nothing! She whispered, the Madam did—'Come!' she whispered, after Abel had thrown her on the bed without her blouse. 'Come! My husband can wait!'" "You fiend! You fiend!" Frau Feuerbach exclaimed. Frau Gutjahr shrieked. She seized a post-card and shrieked. Seized a post-card, addressed it to Feuerbach, and wrote a few blunt words of crass enlightenment about Ruben. She read them aloud. She would have this posted immediately, she assured Frau Feuerbach.

Then, for the first time in long, long years, the tormented woman, weakened by the anxieties of her household and by the endless terror of the carefully preserved sham of her life, lost all control of herself. It mattered not that the same threat had been made innumerable times before and had never been carried out—she saw only her half-blind husband, whose evenings she tried so hard to fill with apparent respectability, at what cost—oh, at what cost only she knew! —she saw him, bewildered and hurt, holding in his hand the card from this blackmailer, this nightmare, this she-devil . . . She saw all this; and she threw herself upon the vile woman, who, screaming lustily, struggled in vain to fight her off. Frau Gutjahr snatched the card from beneath the pillow and tore it into a thousand pieces. Then the vicious harridan, panting with fury, played her highest trump, which she had saved for a long time against an opportune occasion—she told of Mirjam's life and Mirjam's child, which was being boarded by Frau Meier.

It is impossible to say how the Gutjahr woman came by this information, but one surmises that, apart from her friendship with Frau Meier, she must have had accidental access to some official document pertaining to the child. However that may be, she could well be proud of her achievement. The revelation had a deep, yes, a crushing effect, upon her adversary. Ashen-pale, quite silenced, Frau Feuerbach sank into a chair. She would have been less stunned, had not certain doubts regarding Mirjam's mode of living been troubling her mind these many months. She rose without another word, groped for the door, and found herself going down the stairs. "Mirjam!" she said, with silently moving lips. She crossed the courtyard to the street, but turned back again and asked the way to Frau Meier's. The fat woman received her with suspicious curiosity, and understood. She led her with verbose and obviously pretended devotion to a boy—a pale, thin-faced child, with the large eyes that Frau Feuerbach knew so well. "My dear!" she said. She did not ask his name. She kissed the white, thin hand of the child, and went away.

She walked the long way, up one street and down another, to her own apartment. By the time she entered her home, she had made up her mind to tell Feuerbach everything. She was so tired of all subterfuges and lies, that any way out seemed lighter than this bleak darkness. The rooms were empty. Ruben, Mirjam—where were they? Even Feuerbach had not yet come home—his meal was still on the table. She sat down at the table, placed her arms on the new cover, and her heavy head on her arms. She fell asleep.

She awoke with a start when some one turned on the light. Feuerbach stood in the center of the room. She was quiet now. "I have something very serious to tell you," she began. "Now?" he replied. "Must it be now?" He seated himself at the table. She began to tremble. "Yes!" she said. "A grievous, grievous matter lies between us. You must remain calm, and listen to me." Then, she noticed his wretched look, and saw that he was paying no attention to what she said. "Are you ill?" she asked. "Ill?" he answered. "No. It is nothing—merely a trivial incident, but it has strangely upset me, I don't know why. I had to take Farkas an article I had edited. It was rather late—an hour after closing time. As you know, I am usually home by then. But I wanted him to have the article, and so I went into his office. Some one jumped up out of an armchair and smoothed down her hair. It was Mirjam. Did you know that Mirjam was acquainted with Farkas? I didn't know what to say, and so I left. They let me go. It is nothing at all, except that she didn't tell us she knew him!" He paused. Then, his face grew less tense and a tired smile played around his lips: "That is her foolish sensitiveness! She doesn't want to tell me that she knows my employer, because she thinks it might humiliate me!" And once more lost in the blessing of his eternal blindness, he asked: "Do you think we should invite Farkas here some time? If he is Mirjam's friend . . ."

Frau Feuerbach was silenced. She remained silent while her husband ate his supper. He rose. "Ruben is not at home?" he said, half questioningly, with a faint sigh. "I am going to bed," he said, and nodded to her. At the door, he turned and said, with a smile: "Ruben—you'll see! The child will gradually find himself. It has taken a long time, but now at last it is coming about. Yes, dear, things are looking brighter!" He nodded once more, and closed the door behind him. She heard him grope about and undress in the darkness. Then, the bedstead creaked.

Frau Feuerbach remained sitting in her chair, her toil-worn hands before her on the new table-cloth, her hair gray at the temples, her tired eyes gazing, unseeing, into space—she sat there in sluggish thought, and waited. Ruben did not come home, and Mirjam did not come home. At last, she rose, went into the bedroom, and cautiously went to bed, without turning on the light. Beside her, she heard the quiet breathing of her husband. Stretched out on her back, she stared open-eyed at the ceiling, where waving circles of light danced madly. "Husband!" she said; and louder: "Husband!" He awoke. "What is it?" he asked, softly. A hammer pounded in her brain—Fate pounded in her heart. She lay very still. Then, quiet again, she said—and curiously enough, it was the voice of her girlhood, a light, delicate voice, that came forth from her lips: "Ruben is not your child!"

There was silence in the room—a dreadful silence—for endless minutes. Then, she could endure it no longer; she tore herself free from the silence and, groping for the lamp, turned on the light.

Feuerbach was asleep.

TRANSACTIONS

AT about this time, my attention was attracted by the interest which Birkmeier suddenly developed in the inside management of the organization. This interest manifested itself at first merely in his numerous visits to the main office—visits which were too obviously accidental and too stupidly casual to delude me, for to me, who knew the man, it was quite plain that these long-winded, loud-voiced, anteroom conversations in which he indulged, while some one else substituted for him in the factories, were conducted with a specific plan and purpose in mind. It was quite apparent that he was trying to cultivate an intimacy with Abel. So when, one afternoon, he entered my office—his blond hair was now grizzled and his shag-coat had given place to a modish suit, but otherwise he was little changed—and, after a few indifferent, paternal questions, invited me to join a select little gathering, including Johannes Abel, at the Grand Hotel, I knew that something momentous was in the air. His friendly zeal went so far that he assured me that Reinhard, his son, would take great pleasure in calling for me in his car.

And he came. And thus, after years, I saw Reinhard again. He hailed me with jovial verbosity. He was reclining in the corner of a luxurious town-car, in a studied pose of affected nonchalance. His socks were of salmon-colored silk, and he fairly radiated well-earned affluence. He had thick, slightly wavy blond hair, which grew down in front of his ears as far as to the jaw-bone and lent his appearance an aspect of inherited solidity. His eyes were watery blue, of insipid craftiness, somewhat inflamed and shifty; he uttered words of flamboyant honesty, with an all-too-fluent emphasis upon integrity; letting them, so to speak, melt on his tongue with keen enjoyment, like fruit-ices: and it needed all one's attention to discover, behind his pauses, meaningful looks and ambiguous hints, the simple meaning of his verbosity.

I learned from him that he was interested in various business transactions, without desiring to tie himself down to any definite line. During the war, in his official capacity, he had had the authority to grant or refuse permits for exportation, and thus he had made—he savored the word and smiled conceitedly—many valuable friendships. And now, he was doing business on his own account. "One doesn't need an office and clerks, and all the rest of that nonsense," he said. "One accomplishes more and better business at five-o'clock-teas. Why don't I ever see you at teas? There's always dancing. You certainly didn't have any of our snappy Viennese girls in Russia! . . . By the way, you'll meet my sister today," he said; and then, casually: "She is married, you know. Countess Warre. Oldest aristocracy." We had arrived at the hotel, and he preceded me with jaunty steps.

I knew this Count Warre. He was the same who, before his marriage to Birkmeier's daughter, had pestered the Abel Works with one hollow business proposition after another, all of which were invariably rejected by Klein on principle. Here I found him, together with his father-in-law and his wife—she was a fat and slightly pasty beauty, with shallow eyes—dancing attendance upon Johannes Abel, who sat, taciturn, in a corner. Five or six gentlemen in evening clothes, with Roman profiles and furrowed features, had joined this group. During the ceremonious introductions, I discovered that they all belonged to the highest aristocracy of the former régime. A lively conversation was going on. It was, in fact, rather heated; and its never-divergent tendency led me to believe that Abel was being cleverly made the target of the seeming controversy. One of them especially, a count with an old, distinguished name and a member of one of the families that Abel had mulcted for the increase of capitalization, spoke of the possible recall of the exiled Emperor to the neighboring state, with such warmth and at such length that it soon became apparent to me that he was childish and blind enough to hope for monetary assistance in this coup from Abel, whom he called Herr President. The other gentlemen vied with him—as far as this political intrigue was concerned—with a candor and simplicity of mind that I knew only too well from Warre and his commercial endeavors.

I would have liked to follow this conversation further, but I found my attention drawn to another group in the opposite corner of the room. Reinhard Birkmeier sat there with none other than Ducrède, the Frenchman, whom I was somewhat astonished to see in this company. A third man, from his looks a Levantine or Armenian, joined them in a low-voiced and seemingly weighty conference. I seated myself in a position that enabled me to catch a portion of their talk—enough at least to know that they were speaking of some merchandise which was to arrive in eight separate shipments. How? "Fortunately, we have a loophole in the west," said Reinhard, with his conceited smile; and even Ducrède exhibited his decayed teeth for a moment. I was astounded when I heard that the aggregate weight of this merchandise which they discussed so seriously was no more than four kilograms; also, when Gutjahr's—yes, Gutjahr's!—name was mentioned in connection with the deliveries (if I heard aright, he was to receive a half a kilogram), and I was still more astounded when I heard the incredible price. "I haven't that much money!" said Reinhard. "I'll pay forty percent cash, and the rest in ninety day notes." The Oriental grew nervous, but Ducrède calmed him with a look. "Naturally, with your father's endorsement," he stipulated. Reinhard agreed nonchalantly, and when the two had left him, turned to the group surrounding Abel.

There, to Birkmeier's undisguised chagrin, the conversation had switched to business. The seven aristocrats had moved their chairs closer to Abel and were talking eagerly, all at the same time. It soon became evident that their plan for the reëstablishment of the Emperor was not entirely lacking in interest from a business standpoint, and this was doubtless the reason of Abel's obvious attention to their present explanations. In fact, the gentlemen, enlightened by numerous refusals of other propositions, had agreed to burden their estates with a joint mortgage of colossal magnitude, carrying with it a timber-cutting concession, thus personally financing the romantic pretensions of the former Emperor. It appeared, however, that they proposed to use for this purpose only about a third of the sum which they hoped to raise. "The rest is for us. We must also live," said one man, in the nasal voice of an officer. Abel made various notations, and this was what seemed to vex Birkmeier: apparently, he had arranged the gathering for a quite different purpose, and had only invited the aristocrats in order to impress Abel with his connections. He sought in vain to lead the conversation into less personal currents. He even appealed to Helga for aid; but she, simply not grasping the meaning of his imploring gestures, sat smug and smiling among the gentlemen, and titillated now this and now that one with an indifferently inflaming glance. Finally, in desperation, Birkmeier turned to Reinhard, but with the same result.

For Reinhard was absorbed in a new discussion. He was standing somewhat behind me with a short, very erect gentleman, whom I had heard addressed as Baron Preis, suffering a lengthy reprimand, from which I gathered that the baron, in some manner which I did not understand, was Reinhard's superior, and that he was greatly incensed at young Birkmeier's bad taste in allowing himself to be seen in the company of French profiteers—this evidently meaning Ducrède—and furthermore, that Reinhard was counted upon not to absent himself again from the next manœuvre expedition to Hallau, and finally, that Comrade Künnecke had reported that he had not yet received the promised accounting covering the last remittance from Munich. This was quite a good deal at one time, and it was easy to understand that Reinhard, busily engaged in explaining, at great length and with many protestations of good faith, had neither eye nor ear for his father's need.

But assistance had come from an unexpected source. From the lobby, a bumptious little man came toward Birkmeier with vigorous strides, looking at first sight for all the world as if he might have been Birkmeier's twin-brother. The full beards, the expressions of eye and face, were identical. About both was suspended an aura of ostentatious virility. But the newcomer wore a woolen shirt; he had not changed his green, Tyrolean felt hat for a more modern hat-gear and, averse to anything revolutionary or alien, he wore wide, loyal German shoes with elastic sides. Birkmeier, stretching out both hands and forcing a friendly smile, went toward him, embarrassed but pretending glad surprise. He introduced the newcomer as Herr Bohir—the famous Herr Bohiř, Member of the House, of the radically German right wing. Herr Bohiř succeeded in three or four minutes in accomplishing what his full-bearded friend Birkmeier had failed to accomplish by all his stratagems. The seven aristocrats grew silent; they became ill at ease, looked at their watches and seemed astonished, and declared it was high time to go. They took their leave, expressing their wish to continue their interesting conversation with Abel at a more favorable time in the near future. Only Warre remained, and Helga, his wife. To her, sitting in a corner, Bohiř noisily devoted himself, barring her departure with his protruding belly. She sat there, empty-headed and pasty, and titillated him with her indifferently inflaming glance.

And now, apparently, Birkmeier's moment, which he had so carefully planned, had finally arrived. When I turned to him, he was bending over Abel's shoulder, and Abel was reading a letter. I stepped closer, and recognized Samuel Klein's handwriting. It was a letter addressed to Gutjahr, cautiously worded in ambiguous phrases, but, with the help of Berkmeier's comments, of unmistakable meaning. It referred to the conversation Klein had had with Gutjahr with regard to procuring a certain lady, and contained a promise of additional money, upon certain conditions. His face tense, Abel read it again and again, but he said nothing. When Birkmeier expressed his sympathy for Abel in having been duped so long by this son of Judas, and mentioned his own distrust of this Jew from the first, and finally assured him that in future he personally would set himself as a bulwark against such menacing intrigues, Abel rose, in three blunt words thanked the zealous man for his revelations, and left.

AN impartial witness to this scene, only very much astonished to see Klein—Klein, the fox—actually being entangled in such a mad and ridiculous proceeding—as an impartial witness (possibly it had been Birkmeier's intention of utilizing this exhibition to enlist me as an ally) I determined not to take sides in the impending conflict between Abel and Klein—at least, not until it had become evident which would be the victor. So I kept silent about the incident, and Klein—to whom Abel said not a word, and who therefore remained in ignorance of having been betrayed—discovered to his bewilderment that every vital decision—indeed, even the opportunity of participating in important business transactions—had been taken out of his hands by Abel. For a moment, he was startled; but the next moment, he feverishly began to take counter-measures.

These were soon completed. He was managing director, a stockholder and, through a syndicate contract, secure in his position. He considered the struggle between Abel and himself a private matter. So he contented himself with drawing his personal funds out of the Abel Works, and placing them, under fictitious names, in various reputable banks. He could do nothing at present to defend himself. The next moment saw him attacking once more. But I understood all this in its entirety only much later. At this time, I saw but single actions. One day, Klein came to me. "Farkas has not been around for quite some time," he remarked. He was anxious not to lose this connection, he said. Farkas's interest in the Abel Works was not without its value. I should not neglect to call on him, one day soon. As he walked back to his own door, he said, lightly: "Perhaps he feels insulted because we have not informed him of our plans. After all, he is a stockholder. He may ask you about the increase of capitalization. We have nothing to conceal, have we?" And with that, he was gone.

I thought all this over. Klein must again be on the offensive, with a dangerous, almost desperate, but highly effective attack. I understood that he meant to betray the secrets of the questionable transactions of Abel and the Abel Works to Farkas—to *Truth.* This made it clear that the combat between him and Abel had reached a decisive stage. He proposed to expose these secrets, even though in so doing he placed in jeopardy not only Abel, but the entire structure of the business. That meant that Klein had already secretly turned his back on the company, and was connected elsewhere. He did not care to convey this information to Farkas himself, but sent a middleman—sent me—with an order that was not order at all, and could always be construed by him as a misunderstanding. That meant, first of all, that he was not absolutely certain of Farkas, a new and dangerous ally; and secondly, that he believed he had cause also to mistrust me, and would use this opportunity to trip me up and cause me to fall: for the consequence would be that, as one who had betrayed business secrets to the newspaper—betrayed, be it understood, on my own account, and not by Klein's definite order—I would be a dead man, as far as the Abel Works and especially Abel himself were concerned.

All this was cleverly thought out, and it proved Klein to be a master of his craft. The time had come for me to take advantage of the situation and align myself on Abel's side. But to go to Abel and clumsily tell him about this order that was not an order at all, would never do. So, after long deliberation, I decided to follow Klein's suggestion, but cautiously, one step at a time, hoping that, while doing so, I could pick up some more acceptable bit of evidence. A visit to Farkas committed me to nothing, if I guarded my tongue. And so I decided to make such a visit.

This visit passed off quite differently than I had expected. I found Farkas quite wrought up—and his condition, as he immediately informed me, was due to a stormy session with Feuerbach. At first, the old man had actually been engaged to edit the manuscripts of Farkas and his Hungarian assistants, but it had soon been discovered that he could not be used for such work—that he would take more time for the correction of a single article (there were six or seven a day) than could be allowed him for all of them. Then, he had been transferred to the recorder's office, but there also he could not keep pace with the others. Such was the cause of Farkas's ire. "I'll throw him down the stairs!" he said, in a tone of finality; and then, in a suddenly changed voice and with broadly grinning teeth: "What brings you here?"

I had decided upon a plan to make him talk by lulling his suspicions through an embarrassed expression of face and a palpably awkward intention of making disclosures. But I had hardly begun to talk about the Abel Works and the increase of capitalization, when he interrupted me. "Stop right there!" he said. "First of all, you are too stupid to play the part of the dunce. You can't sell me anything that way. And in the second place, you are too late. You hesitated too long. I should wait for you! What do you want to tell me? The story of the cigarettes? And how they were unloaded on Chambord, the half-wit? Sugar! They ought to get three years in the penitentiary for that! Or the story of the fictitious option? Or the secret selling of kronen in Hamburg and London? Another three years in the penitentiary! Or the profiteering with De Letter's canned meats? Go home, young man! And if some one sent you—you can't play the dunce with me. You can't pull worms out of my nose that way!" I was not a very heroic figure when I left him.

What remained a mystery to me at that time was how Farkas could possibly have acquired this information. Later, when it was no longer necessary to grope in the dark, I found its tragic and at the same time ridiculous solution so completely that the interview between Farkas and Ignaz Klein became known to me in its minutest details. For it was Ignaz Klein from whom Farkas had received his knowledge, and the way that had led Samuel Klein's son into the office of *Truth* is strange enough to be recounted here.

Out of the wretchedness of his youth, Ignaz Klein had carried an evil heritage into the realm of his family's suddenly improved conditions—ever-vivid memories and a never-slumbering Terror. He was a being driven by a whip. While his father, under its lash, had thrown himself into the maelstrom of the money-mart; while his sister clutched at anything that offered itself, the whip was driving him, the studious boy, ailing from the torment of nightmares, helpless in the clutches of despondency and terrifying doubts, from one path to another in his quest of salvation. He shunned every useful activity. He was running in circles. He had a vague notion of a new world-system, in which poverty, misery and wretchedness would be unknown. And if at first it had been his conviction that this goal could only be reached through absolute subjugation of the flesh and the renunciation of all things mortal—the idea, by the way, which had led him to Rafael Meier—vacillating searcher that he was, and little satisfied with results gained there, he soon changed his belief and now perceived the only promise of happiness in the newly awakened idea of Communism. He came to this decision after having, by chance, been present one evening at one of the readings at Badele's place. Immediately afterwards, he begged that quiet man to grant him a private interview, and opened his innermost soul to him—not in any romantic or eccentric way, but in the ardent prosiness which he had inherited from his father, in self-tormenting observation and with his instinctive mania for humiliating himself.

Badele, an itinerant shoemaker from Suavia, who, during his imprisonment in Russia, had been converted to the idea of Communism so completely that the leaders of the movement had felt safe in placing him, once he had been liberated, in charge of the small group of Communists in Austria—Badele, who thus far had never met so curious a person, but who, through observation, knew enough about politics to realize that Samuel Klein's son ought not to be repulsed, answered him with encouraging generalities and promised to remain in touch with him; but he did not invite him to another meeting. Ignaz, hypersensitive in his eagerness, felt this reserve and saw his newly discovered solution and salvation vanish before his eyes before he had possessed it, denied him for no other reason than that he was still closely linked to the dance around the Golden Calf. He realized that it would not be sufficient merely to disassociate himself from the money-greed of his father and move into the quarters of the proletariat; that, in order to be accepted as one of them, he would have to bring more substantial proof of his partisanship. So, after several miserable days and sleepless nights, he found no better or more impressive way of proving his sincerity than rummaging through his father's safe and desk drawers, opening and abstracting incriminating letters, surreptitiously listening to conferences, adding a scrap here and a detail there and combining these with the cleverness of his inherited commercial brain, and to carry the material he had gathered in two busy months—a nearly hole-proof and remarkably accurate summary of the murky deals of the Abel concern—to Badele.

Meanwhile, the sudden and increasing misery of the masses had brought to Badele and his companions a far greater influx of converts than the comparatively small and still very young organization could assimilate. So there was much work to be done, and the group had long since been forced to remove its headquarters from Badele's hole in the basement to the first floor of a decent house in the workingmen's quarter. Badele's anteroom was at all times filled with people waiting to see the organizer. As he lingered in this anteroom, ready to offer his accumulated material to the leader, Ignaz Klein was recognized by a reporter of *Truth*—a reporter, paid by Farkas, who was still posing as a sort of exalted Communist, in order to keep the valuable connection with the extreme left open for the paper. It would be hard to say how this snooper managed to discover the reason of Ignaz Klein's visit, or how he succeeded in inducing the waiting Ignaz to leave with him, get into a taxi and go to Farkas's office. But the fact remains that Ignaz Klein, on the 18th of September, at half-past-five in the afternoon, went to Farkas; that he, at once realizing the ulterior motive of the man, abruptly and emphatically refused to part with the material in his pocket—very likely he was offered money, and thereby warned—and that Farkas took the material away from him by force. Ignaz Klein was not a fighter; he weakened, wept, and was finally escorted out of the place. To confide his trouble to any one was naturally out of the question. A victim of despair and self-accusation, he did nothing, remaining idle until other events revived his slackened energy.

My own visit to Farkas occurred on the 19th of September, at eleven o'clock in the morning; and it is now easily seen why he should have been so well informed. I kept to myself not only the details of this interview, but likewise the fact that it had happened at all; for I was certain that Klein would never have believed me, had I told him of the mysterious knowledge of the newspaperman. On the 20th, at two o'clock in the afternoon, Klein called me into his office. He sat behind his huge desk, a late edition of *Truth* open before him. Red blotches showed on his cheeks. He handed me the paper. "Read this!" he said.

In the second column on the fourth page, I found a short, inconspicuous notice:

MEAT PROFITEERS

> According to report, the authorities are trying to apprehend the importers of the canned meats, part of the over-seas war supplies, that have lately

> appeared in great quantities in the markets of the workingmen's quarters. It is suspected that these are discarded stores, sold on account of their half-spoiled condition for almost nothing to a Dutch speculator who in turn distributed them for eight or twelve times the cost to our poorer population. The speculator, we hear, escaped. A search for his confederates is under way.

This meant nothing more or less than that Farkas personally had opened hostilities, for the clumsy and dangerous cleverness with which truth and invention were here intermingled showed his own masterly hand. "You went to see Farkas!" said Klein. "You lie!" I said. "You informed him! Why did you want to send me to him?" "I didn't send you to Farkas!" Klein shouted. I turned on my heel, and went to Abel.

BUT first, more about Gutjahr. His good humor when he left Klein had been quite genuine. For, ever since he had, at such an opportune moment, contrived to manipulate the letter incriminating Klein into the hands of his business associate, Reinhard Birkmeier, he harbored not the slightest doubt but that an open break between Abel and the Jew was merely a question of time. The calculation by which he arrived at this conclusion was of a brutal simplicity. Naturally misunderstanding the basic cause of Klein's revolt against Abel, he was instinctively convinced that more was to be gotten from Abel, the hunted, than from Klein, the hunter. His interest was therefore in Abel. One attempt on the old man's purse—the simple and clumsy attempt on the stairway of Fräulein Calé's apartment—having failed, his plan of attack was now, after much deliberation, to be carried out by more subtle means. He wanted a hold on Abel.

And he, a better judge of human nature than Klein, and yet not profound enough to paint himself a perfect picture of the workings of Abel's mind, appraised the old eccentric in a quite different way.

Abel was old. Despite his energy, despite the wild parties at which he surrounded himself with sycophants and prostitutes, despite the effervescent exuberance of the man he plotted against, Gutjahr was undoubtedly at that time the first and only one who perceived that Abel was finally and irrevocably old. And since he was old, there could be no better way of coming close to him than by procuring for him that longed-for haven of rest and comfort, a place where he could lay his tired head. And should this longing still be dormant in the man, it would have to be aroused. There was no one better adapted for this purpose, consciously or unconsciously, than Ruben Feuerbach. Suddenly to confront the rich, lonely, old man with a youth, and to say: This is your flesh and blood; you have not given him a thought for nearly two decades, but now he is here, to close your eyes when you pass away; now therefore give him something, give him the keys to your safe and your vaults—telling all this to the lonely man was a scene so vividly sympathetic and so promising of remuneration to his procurer's mind, that he found it difficult to remain patient while setting this scheme into motion.

But patience was needed. If he was to realize more than a mere finder's reward, it was first of all imperative to control Ruben Feuerbach. Only an absolute control over this strange, at once foolish and clairvoyant young man, could assure success. And for months now, Gutjahr had persevered in following a plan of coming close to him, of chaining him, of making himself indispensable to him. If I met Ruben occasionally in the vicinity of the old house, if I noted a change in him in many respects, and if the youth alarmed his mother by his many unexplained absences—all this proved nothing but that Gutjahr was succeeding only too well in his endeavor.

In addition to this, once Ruben Feuerbach was his tool, there was another advantage to be gained. Anton's interest in the youth had gradually overshadowed his desire for other boys and young men to such an extent—developing little by little into a sinister, amusing mania—that Gutjahr saw his former autocratic power over the moody, mysterious man grow slack and in danger of being entirely thrown off. It is not impossible that Gutjahr's original motive concerning Ruben was as much to be found in his fear that Anton might slip away from him as in his audacious design against Abel. To control Ruben, in order once more to have Anton submissive—this was Gutjahr's second purpose. The darkly smoldering, at once wild and fawning passion of the lumbering brute was likely to burst into flame at any moment. When, one day, Ruben deplored his helplessness to release a kitten which had come to grief in a gutter on the roof of the old house, Anton, who as usual was trailing the tall boy, threw off his coat and began to climb up the rain-pipe. Amid the breathless suspense of a quickly gathering crowd of children in the courtyard, he, now dirty and bleeding from numerous scratches, brought the half-starved animal into safety and, still panting from his exertion and grinning broadly, clumsily went over to Ruben and, for the first time, saw himself received so gratefully and with such intimate familiarity that the dark blood suffused his cheeks. From that time on, and for a long time afterwards, the heavy lout walked about strangely detached; his clumping step grew lighter; his shifty eyes gleamed, as if in an intoxicating dream, and no less than five of the transient companions of his nightly lechery testified, during a secret examination, that nothing had impressed them more at that time than the maniacal, terrifying cries of the man, in his sleep and while wide awake—cries of dark passion, for Ruben, and again for Ruben. Gutjahr planned, and presently saw himself gaining headway toward his goal. Still remote, still invisible and as yet incomplete, the nets were stretched all around and about Abel. Wherever Abel might turn, there was a trap set for him, ready to spring at the slightest misstep. But that moment was still distant. The hunted was still the hunter. Abel was still firmly erect.

In truth, he was more firmly erect than ever. When, after my blunt dispute with Samuel Klein, when he accused me of having played informer to Farkas, I left the Jew's office to go to Abel, I encountered before Abel's door a person whom I knew by sight as the financial editor of *Truth*. He was apparently leaving in great haste, his face flushed, and as if he had been told to get out. I now know that he had come with a copy of the issue in which the offensive article appeared and, after much hemming and hawing, declared that he was in a position to suppress the series of articles prepared against the Abel Works. "But there are expenses to be defrayed," he said, "so it will cost you money." "For Farkas?" Abel asked. His visitor squirmed, affirmed and denied, and spread his fingers. Abel threw him out. For fully three minutes, he walked up and down the length of his office in deep contemplation. Then, his mind made up, he got into his car. "To the editorial office of *Truth!*" he said.

Farkas received him, his white teeth showing in a broad grin, and motioned invitingly toward one of the commodious armchairs. Abel remained standing. "How much?" he said, drily. The smile abruptly forsaking him, the newspaperman said, in his nasal voice: "The Abel scandal will fetch me forty thousand new subscribers." Abel stamped his foot. "I want to know how much it will cost me to acquire the controlling interest in *Truth!*" he shouted. Farkas slumped into a chair, grew pale and, in a low voice, replied: "They can hear you!" Ten minutes later, Johannes Abel signed a cheque; and the same afternoon, in the office of a lawyer, a contract which gave him a secret but decisive vote in determining the policies of *Truth* and Farkas a certain percentage in various transactions of the Abel Works. When they were going down the stairs, Abel, lighting a cigar, demanded: "And now, who was it? Who didn't know how to keep his mouth shut? Was it Samuel Klein?" Farkas slapped him on the shoulder, and laughed. "That is a business secret!" he said. "You didn't pay for that!" He had his own reasons for not telling. Abel remained convinced that Klein had betrayed him. And he acted accordingly.

DURING the ensuing weeks, Abel developed an energy that put to shame even the industrious Klein, which, however, radically differed from his partner's activity in that it was less tenacious but rather impetuous, less calculating but rather feverish, with a tendency toward adventure—the activity of a gambler who delights in wagering, in uncertainty and in peril of loss. As at the beginning of the great war, Abel once more commenced to buy. He bought everything that seemed to him worth the price. He bought for the thrill of buying. It is not beyond presumption that, in this extraordinary passion, he was influenced not only by the collapse of the krone, but also by the dark, inner urge to have and to hold that is so frequently characteristic of persons who refuse to grow old and tenaciously cling to life.

He bought houses. Houses were cheap. Compulsory legislation kept rents so low and so inadequate of meeting the upkeep, that any one who did not propose to or was not able to pay good money on top of bad, was forced or glad to sell out at any price. Abel often bought houses for prices equivalent to one year's rent in normal times. And soon he bought these houses not singly, but in lots; bought entire blocks in the suburbs, and these not after personal investigation or upon the judgment of an expert, but on the proof of former rents, on the strength of a proven title, or even merely on the evidence of a photograph. After a time, he no longer even confined himself to his native republic. The inflation of the Hungarian and German currency gave him an opportunity to acquire in those countries as well what was to be acquired. He bought and sold, only to buy again. He juggled with finance. He reached up into the air and brought back gold between his fingers.

However, after he had purchased 102 houses for the Abel Works, not only the entire resources of the company, but also every possible bank credit had been exhausted or tied up. Abel called me to him—I was at that time acting as a sort of financial secretary—and instructed me to raise money on these immense property holdings by taking up as many mortgages as possible. But this did not prove to be a possible remedy for the existing condition. When, a few hours later, exhausted after a complete canvas of the banks, I entered his office, I was obliged to tell him that no mortgages were to be had. "Mortgages?" one of the bankers had said to me. "Do you think we are so insane as to give mortgages, when we can buy stocks and foreign currency for our money? When we can lend out money against personal security and receive twelve percent a month, why should we take over long-time mortgages, paying us a comparatively low interest? Don't make me laugh, sir!"

When I reported this to Abel, he was silent. He sat, white haired, behind his big desk and lit a cigarette. His fingers trembled. "We shall have to sell!" he said, in a low voice. Then, he nodded to himself. He is getting very old! I thought, as I quietly left the room. "He is getting old!" I said to Samuel Klein, who sat, idle and brooding, in an armchair. He gazed at me with his red-rimmed eyes and did not seem to understand what I was saying. Later, when I entered Abel's office again, he had the prospectus of a life-insurance company spread out before him. Was he contemplating taking out insurance? Why? For whom? I looked over his shoulder. He was comparing prices. His shrunken finger shook as it moved across the page. "If one takes out life-insurance," he said, slowly, "one can borrow on the policy. One can get fifty percent of the amount of the policy, in cash." I laughed. "But before one can do that," I replied, "the policy must be paid up, which is approximately sixty or seventy percent of the face value. Therefore, you are ten or twenty percent to the bad." For a time, he said nothing; then, slowly: "One can defer the payment of the premium, if one puts up security with the life-insurance." And after a pause, he added, hesitantly: "A mortgage? Could we guarantee the payment of the premium with a mortgage?" He was lost in thought. I did not know what he was driving at. After a long silence, he whispered: "Or if one does not guarantee the payment with a mortgage, but with a timber-cutting contract . . ." His lips kept moving without sound; the words were indistinguishable. Then, he spoke aloud once more: "Do you know if the timber department of the Lloyd's Bank would negotiate on the basis of timber-cutting contracts?" I was bewildered. What could he mean by timber-cutting contracts? "You have no timber land, Herr Abel," I said, cautiously. He did not answer. He sat, his body crumpled, obviously deep in thought. His cigarette had gone out, and drooped between his trembling fingers. I tiptoed out of the room.

The same evening, I witnessed a strange scene. Reinhard Birkmeier had once more invited me to join a select little gathering at the Grand Hotel. To my astonishment, I found only him and his father, when I entered the private salon which they had taken. Both their faces were flushed when I came in, and I gathered from the little I heard that the subject of the conversation they had abruptly ended at my entrance had been the endorsement of a note. Birkmeier greeted me in what was for him an unusually taciturn manner; but Reinhard, standing behind him, with a nod of his head suggested, smiling wanly, that I follow him into a corner. I did so and, a minute later, found myself confronted with an awkward attempt to talk me out of a substantial loan. The reasons that this side-whiskered young man, with his veneer of bluff honesty, offered in excuse of his temporary financial embarrassment were so transparently brazen and at the same time so hazy and ridiculous that I could not help observing, behind all his empty phrases, teeth-chattering, cowardly agitation. I paid little attention to his chatter, and when he offered me participation in the profits of a vague and plainly non-existent transaction, as well as fantastically high interest on the proposed loan, I left him with a casual, facetious remark—an easy manœuvre to accomplish, as the room had meanwhile filled with an animated, bustling crowd.

A large group of ladies and gentlemen, dressed in a slightly eccentric manner, somewhat old-fashioned, yet most dignified, had entered in heated conversation from the hotel lobby and spread to all parts of the room. I recognized Count Warre and Helga, as well as most of the aristocrats I had met here once before. This time, they had come accompanied by their ladies; and therefore I found it most astonishing to hear them all, barons of the Empire and countesses alike, speaking of nothing but money, money, money . . . They talked frankly and humorously, with a sort of insincere sincerity, now striving valiantly to make it appear that their interest was entirely engrossed in some new sport or an eccentric hobby, the next moment speaking bluntly of the pressing need for money in which an uncle or a cousin found himself, and then again of their own market manipulations. I still took as a jest the first question they put to me—an inquiry about the strength of the Rumanian leu—but it soon became clear to me how difficult it must be for all these child-like people, born and brought up to a tranquil, easy life, to maintain themselves under the present conditions. "Mining shares will go up," said a lady-in-waiting to the former Empress, and with nervous hands she smoothed down her thin, white hair. Little attention was paid to me. After Reinhard Birkmeier's unsuccessful attempt to secure a loan, all interest in my presence seemed to have waned.

Suddenly, into this gathering—I did not see the incident from the beginning, but saw only the shocked and disgusted expressions on the faces turned toward the door—burst Johannes Abel. He leaned against the door-post, without removing his hat. His face was flushed, tense and dissipated-looking at the same time. I remembered him looking like this that night in the house of Fräulein Calé. I saw that he had been drinking—that he was drunk. At sight of him, the crowd became agitated and embarrassed. Three or four of the gentlemen greeted him and addressed some remarks to him. He did not answer. They spoke no more. The former lady-in-waiting broke the silence with a single word: "Fie!" Birkmeier pressed his way through the crowd toward Abel.

But before he could reach him, the drunken man slowly lifted a waving arm and, pointing to a painfully embarrassed gentleman, said: "Count Sarnau! You once begged me to buy that filthy estate of yours in Nieder-Sarnau—so that you can once more fill your empty belly and pay those four hundred thousand kronen to the hotel manager—so that he will let you move out with your belongings, and not cause a scandal!" He swallowed noisily. The man addressed paled, then leaped toward him, shouting: "Insolence!" It seemed as if he were about to attack the man. Abel raised his hand, and whispered: "Quiet! Quiet! I'll buy! Keep your mouth shut! I'll buy!" The other, confronted by a wall of passionately angry, silent faces, said falteringly: "You are drunk!" Abel waved his unsteady hand close before the other's face. "*Because* I am drunk!" he shouted. "You ought to be glad that I am drunk! How much did you say? Six hundred million? Your filthy estate is bought!" There was a dead silence. "Albert!" a woman's trembling voice said imploringly, somehow hopefully. The man before the wall of faces stood silent and pressed his elbows close to his body, as if he were shivering with cold or as if he were naked. "Bought!" shouted Abel once more, and clapped him on the shoulder. "A payment on account!" said the other in a choked voice, with quivering lips. Abel's reddened eyes sought and found me. He called me over and tossed his cheque-book to me. "Make out a cheque," he said, heavy-tongued. I sat down at a table—a tiny, gilded console of the Empire period—and wrote.

A deep agitation was noticeable among the crowd. The old lady was almost in a fainting condition. Birkmeier squirmed miserably, not knowing what to do. Three or four people—especially the ladies—protested loudly. Fluttering shouts arose. The crowd moved excitedly about and mingled together. A weasel had found his way among a flock of chickens. The man who had sold still stood motionless. Abel leaned against the door-post, and laughed.

He laughed and laughed, until the tumult died down . . . until one of the seven who had been present the last time (one whose family had been mulcted by Abel at the time of the increase of capitalization) stepped up to Abel and asked him, in a voice of forced joviality, even if a little too loud, how things were getting on and if he—he did not say "Herr President," but "My dear Herr Abel"—if he had decided to take over the joint-mortgage of which they had spoken the other day. "No mortgages!" Abel shouted. "I buy outright! I am buying country estates!" At this, there was great confusion and excitement among the dignitaries of the fallen Empire. Leaning against the door-post, Abel bought six huge country estates with timber tracts—bought them and laughed. "A payment on account!" they all demanded. Not one of them could realize that such a thing as this was really happening. The lady-in-waiting also sold her estate to Abel. "We should have a lawyer," she said, in a falsetto voice; and sat, stiffly erect and trembling, in her chair. They placated her anxiously. Possibly, they feared that the deal might not go through, if a lawyer should appear. "A payment on account!" said six voices together. Abel motioned to me, and I wrote.

And then the first of them, Sarnau, took his hat and, without a word, hurriedly, as though suddenly attacked by nausea, started to leave the room. "Albert!" said a very slender, very blonde woman, hurrying after him. Then, they all took their leave. Hardly another word was exchanged among them. They evaded each other's glances. They left afoot, despite the drizzling rain outside. They were fleeing.

Abel and I remained behind, as did Birkmeier, Warre and Helga. When the count attempted to lead his wife past the man at the door, Abel suddenly placed his unsteady arm around the waist of the pasty beauty, bent down, and kissed her on the neck. Warre stood as if paralyzed. Birkmeier seized him by the shoulder and pulled him away. Helga stood a moment, undecided, near Abel; then, she threw him one of her dispassionate, titillating glances and trotted off.

I accompanied her to the hotel entrance. Then, I returned and found Abel in the empty room, absolutely sober, sitting at the console, bent over a bundle of papers. He looked up when I entered. When he observed my bewildered expression, he laughed softly. "You will always remain a novice!" he laughed. "You are just like those other poor idiots—you were foolish enough to believe me drunk! . . . I needed their estates. Had I been sober, they would have thought it over for another month, and they would have tried to bargain. Now, they are satisfied that they have the best of the bargain. Did you notice how they shied at having a lawyer?" He suddenly stopped talking and became absorbed in the documents before him. These were appraisals of the newly bought properties. "The transaction was well prepared in advance," he said, without looking up. I hesitated; then, I said: "The cheques you paid on account are just about covered." He smiled. "You mean, we won't be able to pay for what we bought? Don't let that worry you! We'll pay! Listen—pay attention to what I have to say, for it is quite complicated. Now, first of all, we have bought six estates, with buildings, fields and timber-tracts. Especially with timber-tracts. As they insisted on being paid in gold, it will cost approximately two and a half million gold kronen. That is quite a lot of money, even if it is only about half the real value. Here! Look over the appraisals. I have just added them—altogether, they come to five and one-fifth million. Naturally, these are the figures of *my* appraiser. I sent a Government official from the surveying department—a poor but honest man. He would bite out his tongue before he would give a false appraisal. That means that the value of five and one-fifth million have been bought for two and a half million. Very well!" "That is not a great bargain," I objected. "All stationary values are rated far below the normal parity."

He looked at me in amusement. "Wait!" he said. "That was only the first item! Secondly, before I came here, I stopped at the Internationale and took out a life-insurance policy. It wasn't cheap—I am not a youngster. An endowment policy. In ten years, I receive five million gold kronen. Sit still! Listen to the rest! I agreed to pay the policy in full within two weeks, in cash. At my age, the cost of a ten-year-policy is about sixty percent of the face value. That means I will have to pay out three million gold kronen within fourteen days, in order to receive five million at the end of ten years." "You won't be able to pay the three million," I said. "Why not?" he asked. I could not help smiling. "You haven't got that much!" He seemed amused. "Listen!" he said. "You are right! I am *not* going to pay the three million, and I will tell you why . . . Because the insurance company will lend me the three million! On a mortgage! On a cumulative mortgage on the six estates which I have just bought. Sit still! I know what you are going to say—you are going to say that these properties have not been paid for. Listen to the third item, then! As I told you, I will pay the Internationale for my life-insurance with a mortgage. For my promissory note of three million, I will receive a paid-up policy, maturing in ten years. What does one do with a paid-up policy? Listen! Before I was at the Internationale, I was at the Lloyd's Bank. The Lloyd's Bank is willing to take the paid-up policy as security for a loan, allowing me fifty percent of the face value. I will deposit the paid-up policy for five million, and receive a loan in cash of two and a half million gold kronen. And with these two and a half million, I will pay for the six estates . . . Do you follow me?"

My head was swimming. I thought it over; then, I said: "You are a genius!" He laughed drily. "So you do not find a flaw? Then, listen further—there is still more to it. Now comes the fourth item. Naturally, the Lloyd's Bank is going to let me have the loan only if I guarantee them, separately, the payment of the interest as well as the repayment of the principal. They wanted a mortgage on the properties. I couldn't very well tell them that I had to give this mortgage to the life-insurance company, in order to get my paid-up policy. Therefore, I made them a proposition to repay the two and a half million, which they loan me on the policy, in ten yearly payments. Ten times two hundred and fifty thousand gold kronen—plus interest, naturally. The payment for the first year would be around five hundred and ten thousand gold kronen, diminishing to the last payment of two hundred and fifty thousand in the tenth year. They asked me: How do you expect to guarantee these payments? Sit still! Listen! The fifth item. Before I went to the Lloyd's Bank, I stopped downstairs in the timber department. If you look carefully through these valuations, you will notice that our poor but honest appraiser did not include buildings and meadow-lands. The appraisals were made only for the timber—only for the timber that can be cut within the next ten years. And in ten years, there can be cut five and one-fifth million gold kronen worth of logs. They are nearly all pine; the youngest tracts are seventy years old, and the others a hundred and ten. Permits for the cutting have been granted. The facilities for shipping are excellent on all six properties: streams for floating the logs, railroad sidings with obligatory service, and two sawmills. As I have said, I went to the timber department of the Lloyd's Bank and sold them the cutting privileges of this timber for the next ten years. For this, they will pay me what I have to pay to the Lloyd's Bank on interest and amortization of the loan I have taken on the security of my life-insurance policy. They will pay this directly to their own bank, thus eliminating all question of guarantee. The timber-cutting contract only will be recorded.

"But that isn't all. The timber department of the Lloyd's

Bank not only pays my debt to the Lloyd's Bank, but also the interest on my three million kronen mortgage to the insurance company. And it will still make money on the deal. And the Lloyd's Bank will make money. And the insurance company will make money. And the six aristocrats sold their properties at a better price than is being paid nowadays. And I?" He broke off. Figures, figures, figures circled before my eyes. He continued, drily: "I? Let us strike the balance. I have bought six estates, without having to go into my own pocket. I have taken out life-insurance, without having had to go into my own pocket. I have completed five different transactions, without once having had to go into my own pocket. Cog within cog—the circle is closed. And in ten years? In ten years, I won't owe the Lloyd's Bank anything; by then, their timber department will have repaid my loan to the last heller. And then, the policy will be mine again. I will take this policy to the insurance company, and receive the five million kronen which will then be due. Of the five, I will put two into my pocket and leave the other three there, for the payment of the mortgage on the six estates. Net profit for me: six country estates, free and clear, with timber, fields and buildings; plus two million gold kronen cash in hand . . ."

He paused, but I found nothing to say. Figures reeled before my eyes. The man before me reached into the air, into emptiness, and streams of gold poured down on him. Here was a wizard, creating gold out of nothing. "You are a genius, Herr Abel!" I said, humbly. He rose and pressed his hat on his white hair. "I am going, now," he said, and waved his trembling hand at me. At the door, he turned and said: "In ten years, our worries will be over!" Then, with a faint smile, he added: "If you hear of any more properties for sale—I would like to take out some more insurance!" He waved his hand again. I looked after him and saw him, very erect and very slender, cross the lobby with vigorous strides and step into the open.

Five minutes must have passed before I followed him. It was raining. He still stood on the curb of the sidewalk. I joined him. From the rim of his hat, from his coat, from his hands, the water was dripping. He did not move. "Herr Abel!" I exclaimed. He seemed not to notice me. His lips were moving. "Ten years!" he said, in a whisper; and many times, while the rain kept on falling, while motor-cars and faces glided by, he repeated: "Ten years! . . . Ten years!" I hailed a taxi. He suffered me to help him into the car, and slumped into the seat. He was as submissive as a sleepy child. I took him home.

Or rather, I took him to his door. When we arrived, he suddenly refused to enter. He remained outside, on the sidewalk, in the rain. "Never mind," he said. "Don't trouble yourself. Leave me alone! . . . I don't want to go upstairs." "Why not?" I asked. "It is dark in the rooms!" he said, in a hardly audible voice. He stood in the rain, and the rain poured down on him until he shivered. Abstractedly, he looked about, and said: "You are still here?" Then, with a dry laugh: "Would you like to spend the evening with me?" So we went up to his apartment, and on the stairs he often stopped to catch his breath.

He occupied five rooms. One of these was an immense dining-room with four windows, tapestried walls and heavy, antique furniture. We sat opposite each other at a table meant for twelve. Not a word was spoken. The servant, noiseless and cautious, served the dinner. The tick-tock of a huge, bronze clock spaced the time. With his slender, shrunken hand, Abel poured a thin, yellowish wine into the glasses. Heavy draperies hung before the windows. Between the *tick* and the *tock* of the clock lay echoing pauses. Abel lifted his yellow glass to the light. "To love!" he said into the silence, and touched his glass to mine. An eery, high-pitched note vibrated, until it died out in the dark corners of the lofty room.

The servant entered. Some one was there who had asked for Abel once before, a few hours ago. A man, accompanied by a youth with curls. The younger man seemed ill or not in his right mind. He was reeling, and had to be led. The man said he wanted to see Herr Abel—Herr Abel personally—privately. And he wouldn't give his name. Should he be sent away? Abel gestured wearily, rose, emptied his glass and left the room.

He did not return. Five minutes, ten minutes passed. I got up and opened the door to the vestibule. It was dark there. I went into the unlighted room adjoining, groped among a number of chairs, finally crossed the room, and stood once more before a closed door. Behind it, I heard some one fall heavily to the floor. I flung open the door and entered. As I entered, I saw Gutjahr—yes, Gutjahr!—hold Ruben Feuerbach in his arms and place him carefully in an armchair. Then, he reached for his hat and left on tiptoe. Somewhere outside, a door slammed.

There sat Ruben Feuerbach—there sat the tall boy in an armchair, and I suspected at once that he had been given either alcohol or narcotics, to such an extent had he surrendered himself, unconscious of his surroundings, to a dreamy languor. The pupils of his feverishly bright eyes were dilated to the utmost, calling and questing, like a velvety abyss. But I had little time to ruminate on his condition or on his and Gutjahr's presence in this house, for, across the room, from the corner of the fireplace, came Abel. He walked with very short steps, and his head was slightly bent forward, so that I could not see his face. He walked up to Ruben. Very slowly and hesitantly, as if a great bashfulness had come over him, he placed his yellow hand on the boy's black hair. Then, I left. Outside, the rain splashed upon the mirroring asphalt.

I afterwards discovered how this strange episode had come about. Gutjahr had gambled with his instincts, and as it sometimes happens with such crude and lucky gamblers, he had succeeded in thrusting his hand through the brambles and creepers of many contacts, through many tangled and perilous cross-currents, and placing it unerringly on the wished-for result, although the way to this success was different from any that he could possibly know. Of this we must speak with great wariness and sparsity of words, for it is a delicate and shy fabric of dream, impulse and premonition that must be untangled and unfolded. It was in such a way that undoubtedly even at that time, unnoticed and very cautiously, Ruben Feuerbach went on his own way. If Gutjahr, in a clumsy yet carefully planned manner, was actually succeeding in getting possession of the boy through narcotics and benumbing persuasions for his contemplated purpose, one may confidently assume that Ruben, in dream-like wakefulness, realized everything, felt what was coming, and yet, with the terrible strength of his weakness, did not resist him. Much later, there was found among Ruben's possessions a note-book that he carried around with him and in which he had been accustomed to write down incoherent and rambling observations of little consequence. "Fourth bench in the garden, the little child," is written in one place; and elsewhere, there is pasted on one of the pages a printed colored picture, cut out of a magazine, portraying a placid, very blue sea, and above it the sky. Ruben had written underneath: "The other star?" There are many similarly unintelligible notations in the little book; and at the time at which these events took place, there is an entry in pencil, without doubt made by Ruben, but his childish hand-writing now abnormally sprawling and reeling, shaky and loose, across the page. "No mercy," he had written, "while flesh is flesh! Man-man is again sunk down into drunkenness!" And beneath it, almost undecipherable among stains of liquor: "God out of the depth?"

TO come back to Samuel Klein . . . Ever since he had failed in his plot against Abel in connection with the exposures in *Truth,* he had sat idly in his huge office, apparently quite checkmated. A great weariness had come over him. Astonishing as it may seem and as little as it was in accord with the little Jew's sober, passionate tenacity, he obviously considered himself beaten. He still tried to gain this or that little victory. Now, he would wrest an unimportant factory from the control of the Abel Works, by acquiring a majority of stock through a middleman, and then breast himself in the next general meeting as the new owner; or he would sell Abel stock through a small banking house, in order to force his opponent into an expensive counter-action so as to keep up the price of his securities; he would occasionally make unexpected sallies into Birkmeier's domain, and metaphorically pin the full-beard against the wall. But whatever he undertook and however many of these petty triumphs he achieved, the real gambler's luck was missing, the real gambler's passion had died within him; he was a rich man and not without power, but —there is no other word for it—his eyes had lost their luster. For long days, he sat in his office, more unshaven than ever and with dirtier collars, smoking cigarette after cigarette.

A certain change, however, was brought about by Abel's great coup. Before the insurance companies and the banks had come to their senses and realized that they had no need of Abel in such deals and that they could easily make the profits themselves—before this realization had been reached and additional combinations of this sort were made impossible by the protest of the English insurance companies to whom most of the business had been transferred, Abel had secured more landed properties under this system with greater future profits than could be calculated and put on paper in the exaggerated figures of the Austrian exchange of that time. But the very impossibility of overcoming this advantage, this tremendous success of his hated foe, gave Samuel Klein new energy.

Energy—it can hardly be called anything else, for Klein, giving up all his former intentions, suddenly withdrew his cleverly invested capital from its cautiously hidden caches, suddenly ceased going to the offices of the Abel Works, and once more called upon all the strength and means at his command for a last, decisive and, in its daring, almost insane attack upon Johannes Abel. But here I must be careful not to anticipate events. At that time, I observed no more than that Klein, which seemed to me sufficiently strange, had effected a reconciliation with his arch-enemy, Geza Balogh—the man who had betrayed him to Abel. He was, in fact, very liberal with the little agent—the once harassed Hungarian was from now on dressed in expensive suits and wore a white felt hat of preposterous elegance.

All this happened during the first two weeks of February. Blanka's soirée was on the 14th of February. But before entering upon an account of the happenings of this day, it is first of all necessary to return to Ignaz Klein.

Ignaz had hardly recovered from his despondency over Farkas's piratical act in connection with the business secrets of the Abel Works and attained some sort of serenity, when he commenced once more to offer himself again and again to Badele and his adherents. And even if his ardor made but small impression on the serious leader himself, Ignaz succeeded, through his numerous visits to the secretarial offices and meeting halls, in gaining a certain casual familiarity with certain of the younger members of the party. And so it came about that when one of them, a man named Bruckner—a pale, unhealthily bloated person with no hair—was ordered to carry out a certain commission in the dives near the docks, this Bruckner showed himself willing to accept Ignaz's company on his mission. "There will be booze to pay for, so you will have to take some money with you," was all he said.

Nine o'clock that evening—it was dark, and the snow was melting under a sudden south wind—they met at the foot of Dresdenerstrasse, where the fence of the coal-yards begins. "No collar!" said Bruckner. "Put your collar and tie in your pocket. Your overcoat is too good, too. Oh, well, let it go!" They went along, side by side, leaning forward in sullen silence against the wet, whistling wind. At the rear gate of the municipal lodging-house stood thirty or forty men, pressed close together against the wall. "Why don't you go inside?" asked Bruckner. "We're having a smoke," said a short, broad-shouldered person with bow-legs, who seemed to know him, taking a handful of cigarette butts out of his pocket. "Here!" he said. Bruckner smoked. "Rotten weather!" said the short person. From a niche in the rear came a whining voice: "You fellows from the party don't help us, either! You talk big in the newspapers, but when it comes to helping the little man—you yourselves eat up the money that's collected!" Some one growled: "Shut up!" and argued with him. But the voice whined louder: "They let the little man croak!" Another man, who wore a straw hat covered with wet snow, agreed with him; he was emaciated and his shoulders jerked spasmodically. "A shaker!" said Bruckner to Ignaz, paying no attention to the abuse.

The wet wind rose again in sudden fury, and a number of the smokers reluctantly decided to cut short their pleasure, preserve the butt's butt in an empty match-box in their pockets, and go into the waiting-room. The bow-legged one whispered: "The inspection is bad to-day. I don't know if I'll be able to get by. The blond inspector—that sissy from Felberstrasse—is sitting upstairs. He sniffed for a while around the new registration card of No. 24, and then he gave him a green bed ticket; to-morrow morning, he'll be arrested before he gets out." "Green?" Bruckner asked. The other nodded: "The ones with green tickets will be nabbed. Red, blue and yellow are safe. The swine change the colors every evening now, so no one knows until morning if he goes to jail or not." Bruckner asked: "Then, how do you happen to know about 24?" The bow-legged person answered: "They won't let him go outside. He managed to send us a note—told us not to worry; that they won't find anything on him." "That must be reported!" said Bruckner and, with Ignaz, crossed the empty lot to the street where the car-barns are. "It is the duty of capitalistic society not to suffer the outsiders to lie on the street!" Ignaz said. The other threw a troubled, astonished glance at him, but did not answer.

When they entered the bar-room—banners, banners, paper streamers everywhere; blinding white lights from acetylene lamps and blaring jazz-music from a podium—when they entered the bar-room, where along the walls at small tables the pimps sit and trade in men's watches and cigarette cases under the marble tops, the Jew who, in the evening, buys the old clothes that have been collected by begging and, in the morning, those received at the lodging-house—two glasses of booze for an overcoat; a portion of potatoes for a pair of shoes!—this Jew stepped up to the two. Bruckner said: "I am afraid No. 24 is in trouble!" The Jew just answered: "Thanks!" and half a minute later was arguing with a powerful fellow about a silver fountain-pen. A short, fat prostitute, who looked like a respectable middle-class woman in her plain, neat clothes, entered and offered Bruckner her hand. She scrutinized Ignaz very carefully. "A brother," Bruckner explained. The woman also gave Ignaz her hand and, turning back to Bruckner, said: "Beastly weather! All one does is ruin one's clothes and shoes." "No business?" Bruckner asked. "I've been walking the streets since six o'clock!" she answered. "Had one—a deadhead. If you don't get the money in advance, you can whistle for it. . . . Isn't that the truth?" she demanded, turning to Ignaz. "Have you been at it long?" he asked. He noticed how her searching look, her face changed at his question. "Only for the last six months," she said, and her eyes flickered. "My parents died then," she went on. "I was engaged to the manager of a bank, but—" Bruckner interrupted her. "Never mind that!" he said. "He is really one of us!" He shook her hand and, with Ignaz, left the place.

Silently, they plowed through the wind. "It will never be!" said Ignaz to himself, and his wide-open eyes were filled with a newly awakened, bitter sadness. For half an hour, they plowed through the wind and fought against the black, inflexible wall of biting dampness. Then, they found themselves at the harbor, behind the bridge-head. They turned sharply to the right into a street that penetrated through the gloomy, lantern-lit solitude into the dark, wintry wilderness. Some one, his coat collar pulled up, stepped out of the shadow of a building and silently joined the two. "They are at 'The Shepherdess,'" he said. "Why not in front?" Bruckner asked, startled. "Two bulls there!" the newcomer answered. "Plain clothes." For no apparent reason, the three had suddenly fallen into a trot along the silent row of houses, and swerved to the left into the blackness. Now, there were no more lanterns, no more houses—only a sidewalk, bordered by hilly building lots, covered with frozen, rustling winter reeds. Ignaz was breathless. They slowed up a little. "Committee meeting?" Bruckner demanded. "District leader!" came from behind the coat collar. "About the demonstration to-morrow morning. Electricians! They want to be in front of the parliament building at six o'clock, so the police can't break up their march again." And then: "Something else! A Fascist—came to us for protection." "Vehme?" Bruckner asked. "Yes," was the answer. "He says they threw him off the bridge an hour ago. But he could swim. The men from the *Baja II* pulled him out and brought him here. He is at 'The Shepherdess' now, and there is a conference to decide if he should be taken under protection." "It may be a plant," said Bruckner. "He nearly drowned!" the other protested. Then, after a pause: "Something else, too! About detectives! Somebody must have snitched again. Every time there is a meeting, the police know about it!" And, from behind clenched teeth. "I'd like to find that son of a bitch! I'd stick a knife in his guts!" And, after a while: "They were laying for the last courier who came in from the border—there, on the corner, where the road turns to 'The Shepherdess.' But he ran. They nearly got him, though!" He breathed heavily: "I'd like to get hold of them!" and gnashed his teeth.

Once more, they had fallen into a trot. To the left was the cold-storage plant and the broad tower of a granary; then, grain elevators, the dry-dock and a long row of ships, the blackest of black tug-boats, and the choppy chattering of mysteriously busy waves around the silent, blunt bow. "Red Front!" said the man behind the coat collar, and taking four strides to the right, he faded away. Then appeared a solitary wooden shack, the little road-house called "The Shepherdess"—during the summer and in the spring, the rendezvous of lovers, mostly factory workers from the outlying suburbs. They entered into the smoky light and the thick, sticky atmosphere of the bar-room. Sailors were there—they sang in Serbian—also stevedores and several prostitutes. "To your left!" said the huge proprietor to Bruckner, who grasped Ignaz by the arm and pulled him through a door on which was painted "Toilet." Now, they went through a stinking corridor, where a little oil-lamp flickered, and then to the left, onto an entirely bare, glass-enclosed veranda. "Wait here!" said Bruckner, turning at the door. "I'll order you a grog."

It was bitterly cold. Ignaz gulped down the drink the waitress brought, and two minutes later doubled up with terrible cramps. He went into the corridor. There, he accidentally pushed against the oil lamp, extinguishing it. He stood in darkness, voices and noises all about him. From the bar-room, in a vaguely stirring monotone, came the loud, melancholy singing of the Serbians. Somewhere a faucet leaked, *drip—drip—drip*, upon stone. From a room somewhere on the other side, he heard subdued voices. Some one whispered, persuasively and at great length—whispered a whole speech. That would be the secret conference. "Here I am!" Ignaz called into the darkness. The place stank. The cold was terrific. He tried to grope his way back to the veranda, but ran against a wall and could not find the door. He had no matches. Could the door have been further over there? A knob slid into his searching grasp, and he turned it.

He had missed the door he sought, and stood in a long, very narrow room. Light dripped from a hanging lamp above the door. Far in the rear, in a corner, stood an armchair. In it sat a very young, emaciated man, whose blond hair fell over his forehead. He was shivering. His whole body shook and quivered. Ignaz, peering from his short-sighted eyes, stepped nearer to him and saw wet clothes sticking to his body. The blond felt his gaze. He raised himself somewhat in his chair, and said, with chattering teeth: "I don't mind that. Only, don't send me outside!" He sank back, and said no more. Ignaz leaned against the wall, close to the door, and gazed, silent and very pale, at the young man. The suppressed voices of those in the conference came from behind the wall of the next room. He heard the dripping of water. The two looked at one another, and said nothing.

Then, the man in the wet garments rose and whispered to Ignaz through the iciness of the room—the breath froze as it left his lips. "They took me across the bridge—to report to the county leader, they said, because yesterday some one tried to knife me, and I had reported it to the police. They kept asking me: 'What happened at the police station?' 'What did you say to the police?' 'What did the police want to know?' And as we were walking across the bridge, the man in charge asked me again: 'What did they want to know about the shock troops?' 'There was nothing said about shock troops,' I said. They asked no more. We walked faster, always faster. The bridge was deserted. When we reached the center, some one shouted: 'A corpse! A corpse in the water!' We all looked. I bent only slightly over the railing. The man in charge shouted: 'Bend over! You can still see it!' There were shouts: 'Bend, damn you!' At that, two of them grabbed me by the foot. I hung on to the railing—I dug my fingers into it. Then, they kicked at my hands with their boots. Some one shouted: 'Hurry up! Quick!' Then, the water."

He stopped and panted, his teeth chattering; and the two looked at one another for fully a minute. Now, I really should give him my coat; I should take off my coat, and say: This is for you! thought Ignaz; but he thought: I'm not going to do it! "If only I don't have to go outside again!" the wet youth whispered between shivers; and then he suddenly stared in alarm at the door.

The door had opened, and on the threshold stood Badele. He did not notice young Klein, who was still standing against the wall. "We'll take care of you," he said to the wet boy. "You can go at once on board the *Baja II*. She's going down to Pressburg. There, you'll get further instructions." He looked at the boy thoughtfully, and said: "You'll need some clothes." Ignaz stepped forward, a flush on his cheeks. "Perhaps my overcoat—?" he said. Badele, startled, turned quickly upon him. "You, here?" he asked, and there was distrust and menace in his eyes. He asked many questions, seeking to discover how much Ignaz knew. Then, he stepped into the corridor and whispered with some others. He returned. "You can go," he said to the wet man. When the other had left, he said to Ignaz: "You wait here."

The bespectacled youth stood alone in the cold room and heard the murmur of a new consultation—a talk that seemed to grow into a quarrel, although it never swelled above a whisper, so that he could not understand what it was about. Had he been able to hear, he would have had reason to be far more agitated than he was. For, when Badele had reported to the others about Ignaz, about the insistent entreaties of the young man to be taken into the party and his unexpected presence in the next room—"What does he know? How much has he heard?" asked Badele—there arose an aggressive young man, known to be dissatisfied with Badele's leadership and in constant correspondence with Moscow, who said: "I don't understand, brothers, what you are still hesitating about! The police know every word we say. We have sat here for four hours, asking each other: 'How? Whence? Who can it be?' Now, we catch that Jew in the next room, listening. The Jew will get his punishment, and that's all! The Jew goes into the river!"

Badele, seemingly very calm but red of face, responded: "As long as I sit here, he shall not! This is not Moscow. That is the method of the shock troops—not ours!" His opponent replied, bitterly: "Not ours! We rather let them hold up our couriers!" "This Klein is rattle-brained," Badele replied, "but he has nothing to do with the police." A man with a gray pompadour nodded affirmation. "And he did not hold up our courier, either!" he said. The young man, still bitter, saw himself outvoted. He merely asked: "That means, we will let him go, then?" "Not that!" said the gray-haired one. "He wants to join the party. We will enroll him, and then we'll be sure of him. We will make him one of us, and send him home. Then, he'll keep his mouth shut!"

This course was finally decided upon. Badele went to Ignaz. "You wanted to be taken into the party," he said. "You are accepted." Ignaz glowed with joyous pride. He could not say enough to thank him. Badele interrupted him, and said: "You will have to take oath of silence and obedience." He held out his hand to Ignaz. "Silence and obedience!" repeated Ignaz, his voice somewhat too loud, and gripped Badele's hand. "You must go home now, and wait until you are summoned!" Badele said, drily. He called into the corridor: "Is Jablonski there?" "In the bar!" answered a voice outside. Two minutes later, Ignaz and the Slav were going along the dreary river-front to the bridgehead. There, a few loafers idled under the tin canopy of a saloon. A taxi rattled by. Ignaz hailed it. Jablonski closed the door after him, and disappeared. As the car started to roll away, the loafers looked after it. Ignaz thought he recognized Gutjahr among them. But before he could make sure, the taxi had turned a corner.

Bare streets glided by him in the workingmen's quarters

—streets of drab similarity on this wet, windy evening. Ignaz sat freezing in the clattering car. He was excited by the events of the last hour, filled with a strange solemnity—yet, oddly ashamed and disillusioned. And when suddenly, at a street corner, the traffic roared, lights flamed and laughter fluttered, everything seemed somehow unreal and flat—the present moment, as well as the recent past. A moment later, he was in the quiet street and in front of the house that had once been a palace. . . .

WHEN he had unlocked the outer door and entered the vestibule, numerous strange odors assailed his nostrils. The coat-rack was jammed with coats, furs and hats. When he switched on the lights, he saw Moritz, his brother, standing in the dark, listening at the door leading into the salon. "What are you doing here?" asked Ignaz. "Guests!" said the boy with a pale smile, and trundled awkwardly into his own room. Ignaz hesitated a moment. Then, he threw his snow-wet overcoat across a chair and entered the room.

It was dark—absolutely dark—yet, one could not mistake the fact that there were people in the room. Ignaz had stopped near the door, and grasped the back of a chair that was barring his way. He stood in darkness; he heard words uttered in undertones, whispering and giggling; smelled alcohol and perfume; saw here and there, in corners and close to the floor, the fireflies of burning cigarette-ends. He stood there, ill at ease and motionless. "Did some one come in?" Blanka's voice asked softly from somewhere. "I did," said Ignaz, and he heard her whispering to some one: "My brother!"—a whisper that did not come to a finish but, for some reason, sank into a soft groan. To the left, not far from the dining-room door, on a couch, women giggled. Women giggled on the rug that lay folded together between the windows. Ignaz started cautiously, a step at a time, for the open door leading to the unlighted music-room. Near the threshold, he collided with some one—and that was me, bringing an ash tray to the Turkish divan in the corner, where I had been sitting. Lucy was excited and tired, and wanted a cigarette. "Oh, it's you?" I said. "Excuse me!" mumbled Ignaz, without recognizing me, and groped his way back to the chair. There he sat down and, laying his fingers on the smooth edge of a small, round table, sat erect and stiff in the darkness. The floor creaked.

He could see practically nothing of what was taking place in the room—but he could hear. Somewhere in the darkness, now beneath the chandelier, now close to the door, a few men and women were turning and gliding in a dance-step, silently absorbed. One of them, very softly, as if detached, whistled a melody to the dance. Whenever the dancers glided by the couch on which the young Fräulein Hinterhofer, the flaxen blonde who designed borders on book-covers, reclined in company with Herr Blitz and Frau Blau, she would interrupt herself and, slightly offended, cause her nostrils to flare, secretly regretting that no one could notice it in the darkness. She was telling at great length, stuttering nervously, of a dream; a cocaine dream—Margit, the sociologist, she who was going with young Birkmeier, had procured the white powder for her. "And then," she continued, "the beautiful Greek youth bends down to me, and the toga glides slowly from his shoulders and falls to the floor. He is naked. And then, he carries me through twelve rooms . . . I counted them." Herr Blitz, who was a business man, said: "That's a little too much of a good thing!" Fräulein Hinterhofer, offended, ceased talking; but Frau Blau sighed, for no reason: "Greece! Hellas!" She was sitting between Blau and the girl. "And you?" she asked, laying her fat fingers on her neighbor's knee. "I?"

said the young woman. "I? While he was carrying me like that—do you know the painting by Kokoschka, 'The Bacchante'? Imagine Eros—but Gothic! Not huddled, but tall. That's how it was. I don't know if—" She interrupted herself, and called across the room toward the opposite corner the single word: "Fischl!"

This was the name Fräulein Wendriner over there had not been able to recall—the name of José Maria Fischl, the Expressionist. Ignaz Klein, sitting motionless in his chair, heard Fräulein Wendriner call back across the room: "Thank you!" She then turned back to her companion—the one with the spider fingers—and said: "That's it! Fischl!" but just then the dancers passed so close to his chair that he had to move aside, and he heard only the conclusion of Fräulein Wendriner's criticism: ". . . chaotic, like Michelangelo.' But already there were many other things to catch his attention. While in four or five different parts of the huge room they talked in murmurs, giggled and smoked, it was again the group around Frau Blau that became audible to him. They were in view of the dancers silently gliding by them—it could now be seen that there were not three women in the dancing group, but only two: Blanka's blonde friend and the slender Frau Doderer; the third, pale and closely nestling, being Baron Hackwitz, whose friends called him Melanie—when the three glided by them, Frau Blau sighed: "Jakob Böhme! After all—mysticism! To yield and melt away, that is the only thing!" Her fat hand lay on the thigh of the girl, who was silent, her nostrils flaring in the darkness. Only Herr Blitz, who was a business man, awoke, lifted his feet upon the couch and lay his head, slickened with brilliantine because he detested the tendency of his hair to curl, in Frau Blau's silk-clad lap. She said no more, only stroking his cheek with gentle tenderness and amorously squeezing three of her fat fingers between his collar and neck, while her other hand, on Fräulein Hinterhofer's thigh, by way of experiment, suggested agitation by a faint quiver. Herr Blitz's head was heavy. She said: "Hellas! There, they still knew how! Plato, for instance . . ." She shoved a fourth finger between Blitz's collar and neck, and asked: "You know the 'Symposium'? Ah, Plato!" Fräulein Hinterhofer's nostrils flared in the darkness. "By Rudolf Kassner!" she said. But Herr Blitz, who was a business man, sat up straight, and said: "How so, by Kassner? You mean 'The Morals of Music'!" The two women answered at the same time, but Ignaz could not understand what they said.

He rose slowly and went cautiously—for the three intertwined dancers were close by—toward the window. He stumbled. "Is some one there?" Blanka asked. "I!" said Ignaz. "My brother! It is nothing!" said Blanka, turning back to her two companions. She lay stretched out with the Wendriner girl and the one with the spider fingers. Ignaz walked carefully—once he stumbled over my feet and apologized without recognizing me—back to his chair. There he sat again, his fingers once more on the edge of the little round table. He heard Blanka say: "That is a matter of taste. First of all, there wouldn't be any allurement—" "What of it?" interrupted Fräulein Wendriner; but Blanka—as she lit her eighteenth cigarette, her face was illumined for a moment—replied: "If you ask me, it should be everything at once, or nothing." She with the spider fingers—Frau Boschek, a colonel's wife—said, in a dusky voice: "Then, there must be three!" All three ladies were obviously of the same opinion, for no argument followed. Only Fräulein Wendriner said, thoughtfully: "Leibniz's hypothesis of the existence of God is thereby disproved then, if you ask me. If there is a God, why must one be in threes?" But Blanka only nodded her head, and said: "Buddha!"

And then there were many things, somewhat confused, that Ignaz heard at the same time. Like a draft of cold air, new life had come over the languid ones—the dark room suddenly grew animated. "But such a wee, wee, wee little cactus as mine, she hasn't got in any one of her three salons, and if she bursts . . ." said fat Frau Becker, with childishly pursed lips, as she straightened her blouse. ". . . I prefer the Rig-Veda to all the others," declared little von Hellm. "Of the finest! None better in the whole world!" rasped the famous Krille, the producer, the go-getter, who came from Berlin. Herr Blitz, who was a business man, only said, "Magnesite! On account of the youngsters what come out . . ."—his German was less academic. "Fischl? Fischl!" said the high voice of a very young girl, but one could not be certain that she also meant the poet. It was Blanka who explained: ". . . an ascetic, but wrote the Kâma-sutra." "Why an ascetic?" asked Frau Boschek, the colonel's wife, in a mannish voice, disrobing, with polyp-eyes, six young girls in the room and drawing them to her and under her, until they all, entwined in their exhaustion like the ends of eaten asparagus, slowly revived and dissolved into the reflection of a light at the edge of a rug. "Why an ascetic?" she asked, again. "Because cactus—but she wouldn't understand that—can best be raised with canary droppings; yes, sir! and with a little buttermilk poured over them," answered Frau Becker, the hippopotamus who—under the protection of the darkness—was boring her finger into her nose; and Frau Becker then—presto!—invented a brassière which made her as slender as a doe before its first pregnancy; at any rate, more slender than that stenographer she had met yesterday taking dictation in the private office of her husband (Exports! Best quality merchandise only!) for the second time, unfortunately. "Yes, sir! With a little buttermilk poured over them!" she repeated, in her child-like voice. "136, 2116, 14,220, 36, 912, 214, 788, 339, 894, comma seventeen," quoted Herr Blitz, who was a business man; and, with his sword, ran through Hitler and Husserl, who had done him out of four carloads of minute hands (freighted, net weight or gross less 2⅛ percent, 6¾ against bill of lading, or how can one exist?)—ran his sword through Hitler and Husserl, through both of them on the floor of the Stock Exchange, before the assembled competitors, in a bona fide duel. "A true book on the South Sea Islands?" asked he with the mile-long nose, and spit the word "Dschuangdsi" into the center of the room; it was of rubber, and twenty-two played football with it. Hehehehehehe! That sounded almost like a machine-gun. Hehehe! On the threshold between the music-room and salon, little von Hellm at last had his fat one in bed, and did deeds of manhood of which future generations—to-day they had no idea—would whisper with respect—indeed, gentlemen! He alternated the fat one at will with that cashier, that Pittigrilli of the Leichenkeller establishment, and indeed, sir! were she willing or not, with Frau Boschek, the colonel's wife. That closed the circle. "Neither in Europe, nor America, nor anywhere at all," said Herr Krille, "whenmyfivehundredandfiftygirliesin arevueshowtheoldpapasintheorchestratheirlegsnotasoulwill blababoutgoetheandcultureetceterawhilewespendtwoandtwentybillionmarksaloneforpublicityetcetera . . ."

The atmosphere had gradually become less fevered. The one who said: ". . . Themselves to blame for poverty . . . if they wanted to work . . . lazy bums . . . proletariat" —the one who groaned all this between his teeth while he tried to relight his cigar, was Doctor Fallarap. "Swe-e-et!" confided Frau Becker, and from somewhere out of the darkness a skeptic said: "What of it?" All this—a gentleman near the door spoke of "Cosmos"—all this would have been, to Ignaz Klein, still sitting stiffly erect in his chair—"Buddha!" replied Fräulein Wendriner to the spider—more depressing than amusing, had not Doctor Fallarap caught fire at the same time as his cigar, and started to voice his social convictions. "Eleven-hour-day, no relief-fund for the unemployed and corporal punishment!" He concluded his dissertation, and leaned his broad backside against the door-post. Then Ignaz Klein arose. "Pardon me!" he said. He was very agitated, and spoke distinctly across all the chatter: "Pardon me, but those are capitalistic platitudes!" Doctor Fallarap was not the man to evade a duel with intellectual weapons. "Pardon me!" he replied. "While I do not know with whom I have the honor of speaking in this darkness, if what I say is a platitude, then it is certainly a platitude to call it a platitude! Socialistic sentiment, eh? We suffer from over-population, that's all! When a million is wiped out, four million can live. That is socialistic sentiment, I tell you!" Ignaz stood at the other end of the room, and spoke into the sudden silence: "That is inhuman! That is"—oh, he searched for words to express himself; scorching words: and he hated himself for not being able to find any—"that is an abominable way of thinking!" Doctor Fallarap crowed: "Do you know what you are saying? You talk, sir, like a Bolshevik!" The skeptic in the darkness said: "What of it?" Two laughed. Frau Blau said: "In Berlin, I read on the walls: 'Surrender! Surrender!' That is the way out." Four laughed. Ignaz Klein—suddenly, he felt very lonely—Ignaz Klein said: "Excuse me, but wouldn't it be more human if we would all talk like Bolsheviks?" That was too much. Twenty laughed, and Doctor Fallarap, the victor, carried away by the applause of the others, crowed: "Excuse me for laughing! But with whom am I speaking, anyway?" And still crowing, he turned on the light.

They all blinked in the sudden glare. The room lay in drab disorder. When Doctor Fallarap recognized, in his opponent, the son of the house, his belligerency gave place to a broad grin. He stepped up to Ignaz, who still stood, bitterly ashamed, near his chair, and offered him his hand. "Chivalrous!" he crowed. "Pardon me!" said Ignaz, in a low voice, but not without firmness. "Pardon me, but with you I do not shake hands!" The other changed color, was about to reply sharply, but then he only laughed: "Young man, when you get to be as old as I am . . ." He broke off and, suddenly bending forward, stared sharply at Ignaz's coat-sleeve. He reached over with two fingers and held something up to the light. He screwed up his face into folds, crowing: "Where have you been? A bedbug! Where did you pick up this bedbug?" He laughed lushly, slapped his thigh, and went into the music-room. Ignaz turned and, without another word, left them. I said: "To Calé's! We'll all go to Calé's place!" But most of the others wanted to go to the Shimmy Bar. We all crowded into the vestibule. Fallarap wailed: "My wallet is gone! I left it in my overcoat, and it's gone!" They laughed. But somebody else missed a purse. "Dirty outrage!" said one of the ladies. They began to leave. On a plate, for the maid, lay paper money in a filthy, yellowish heap. Behind the door of the bath-room stood Moritz.

There were only about eight or ten of us left in the vestibule when Samuel Klein entered from the outside. He had tired eyes and said: "Are you going out so late, Blanka?" She was buttoning her long gloves with her teeth, and did not answer. "I am going to bed," Klein said. I saw his gaze, directed toward the adjoining corridor, become tense. There a door had opened, and next to Klein's sister, who was garbed in a figured bath-robe and had reddened eyes and disheveled hair, stood a tall, lean man. Instruments rattled in a handbag. "Doctor!" stammered Klein. His face grew ashen. "Selma?" he whispered. Suddenly, he came to life and rushed by us without a word. I heard his voice in the other room.

Klein's sister, in the meanwhile, had passed silently through our group, without paying the slightest attention to any of us, and disappeared into the kitchen. Close behind her came the doctor—now, in the light, we could see that he wore a pathetically threadbare summer suit and a thin overcoat. He opened the kitchen door slightly and called in a feebly jovial voice after Klein's sister: "Fat? You will let me have a little more fat? Chicken fat? A few ounces! Will you kindly wrap it up for me? A little fat—yes, thank you, madam! Thank you very much!" He thrust his hand through the crack of the door and carefully deposited the small package in his pocket. He turned, his face suddenly drawn and tired, pushed through the crowd with absent-minded greetings—for a moment, we still saw his narrow, rounded shoulders—and then he was gone.

No, it didn't mean anything to us. Stumbling and noisy, we went down the broad stairs. For a while, we lingered before the closed door like a swarm of bees. Then, one after another, we vanished into the night.

THE BATTUE

THERE is still more to relate of this February 14th. In explanation of my merry mood at Blanka's party, I must say that my living conditions had been radically changed in the preceding weeks. And that came about like this:

To alleviate the general misery, the Government, after many blundering attempts at custom regulations, once more decided to protect the factories of the country—which had always stood on a shaky foundation and were unable to meet foreign competition—against importations by the wall of an exorbitant tariff. Consequently, the importations of manufactured chocolate and cocoa powder were also curtailed. And while the Abel Works profited by the ensuing increase in home production, we had for years, on the other hand, done a very lucrative business in the rural districts with a cheap grade of cocoa which was being manufactured in neighboring states, formerly part of the old Empire but now independent, and in factories and workshops unfit for any other kind of production. This branch of the business was naturally made impossible by the high tariff. The loss was considerable but not in any way critical, and this in itself would not have occasioned much thought, had it not been the cause of certain most significant events.

One day, Abel called me to him. Geza Balogh sat in his office, holding his new white hat on his knees. "Now you can go ahead," said Abel. Balogh made himself more comfortable. "How much does cocoa powder cost?" he asked. I answered: "Thirty-four thousand and thirty-six thousand kronen, depending on the quality. How much do you need?" Balogh took a small mirror out of his vest pocket and examined his lower lip, turning it inside out for the purpose. He said: "Need? I don't need any! How much does Holland cocoa powder cost in Holland—the best cocoa in the whole world?" I answered: "Thirty Dutch cents, or nine thousand kronen. Also, ten thousand." He raised his hand: "Let us say eleven thousand. And now how much, from Holland here, is the transportation?" "About one thousand kronen per kilo, by the carload. Why all this?" He raised his hand. "Wait a moment!" he said, "that would mean—in transit—twelve thousand kronen in Vienna. And do you know what the duty is?" He paused for effect, then leaned far forward and trumpeted: "Twenty-two thousand five hundred kronen per kilo!" I laughed. "Do we need you to come here and tell us that?" asked Abel. Balogh glanced at him with a ludicrously piercing look in his eye. "I came here," he said, "to sell you Holland cocoa for sixteen thousand kronen, including duty!" Triumphantly, he looked from one to the other. Abel whistled through his teeth. I asked: "Including duty? Where the duty alone is twenty-two thousand five hundred kronen?" He raised his hand. "Wait a moment!" he said. "The duty is paid. You get your receipt. Give me your check for a hundred and sixty million, and to-morrow at noon you will receive a carload of Holland cocoa, duty paid. De Yong. Best quality." Abel exchanged a look with me. He said: "Deliver it, and you'll get your money on the spot—not a moment before!" Balogh rose. "Are you afraid?" he said, deeply injured. "Do you know who Balogh is? A Balogh does not run away with a lousy hundred and sixty million kronen! The biggest piece of business in the whole world I bring you, and you are afraid! If you don't want to pay in advance—" he stopped significantly. "Sorry!" Abel said shortly. He got up. It took almost another quarter of an hour until they had reached the decision that I was to go with Balogh and carry the money. "Take a revolver with you," said Abel.

We took a train and sat in a wretched, cold, bare second-class compartment. It was a local. Balogh fell asleep, his mouth wide open; now and then he awoke with a start, to fall asleep again. When we reached the little station on the Hungarian border, the night was heavily overcast with black clouds. On the deserted loading platform before the station baggage-room, cold arc-lights shivered. Beyond the unlighted tracks, metal clanked on metal: freight cars were being switched. I followed Balogh up a few steps to the platform, through a door to the left, opened for us by a subordinate railroad official—his coat collar was pulled up to his eyes—and on into the interior of the freight department, filled with rows of barrels, bales and packing-cases. Far in the rear of the long shed burned a single pale electric bulb. We walked toward this. A customs inspector sat in a glass-partitioned office. He seemed to be waiting for us. Without a word, he rose and motioned us to follow him. Through a corridor, we returned to the loading platform. The man turned and asked: "The gentleman wishes to see the merchandise?" I nodded. He took us to one of the dark freight cars, sleeping on a siding. "Here!" he said. When I let my flashlight play over the car, he covered it with his hand and snapped: "That won't do! Some one will see us!" Then, with Balogh's help, he brought four of the little boxes to me—boxes which I had pointed out at random. We opened them carefully. They contained good cocoa in parchment paper-bags, weighing five kilograms each. "Taken!" I said. The man nodded, and we returned to his little office. He filled out some printed forms, stamped and signed them. He handed one to me. I read it. It was an official receipt, a clearance paper, proving that I had sent ten thousand kilograms of duty-free cocoa powder across the border. "I get forty million," said the customs inspector; "four thousand kronen per kilogram." When he saw me holding the receipt in my hand, looking at it in bewilderment, he was painfully surprised and whispered to Balogh with what seemed to me reproachful vehemence. The latter pulled me into a corner.

"This is the biggest deal in Europe!" he said, and toyed with one of my overcoat buttons. "I imported the cocoa from Holland. I stored it here, in the custom-house, temporarily, as duty-free transit goods—here, where I know some one who takes. Says the custom-house: Herr Balogh, send the cocoa across the border or pay duty! What do I do?" He paused, as he loved to do, for effect, then hissed into my ear: "I send it!" "You send it?" I asked. He hissed: "*Nu!* Do I? There stands the freight-car. That goes over the border into Hungary—the empty car! The goods are taken off and stay here. And for the proof that the cocoa has been sent across the border, he over there gets four thousand kronen per kilo. The biggest deal in the world!" he exclaimed once more. I laughed. "You scoundrel!" I said, and was satisfied. I paid. The boxes were unloaded that same night, transferred to another car and rolled back westward, while the empty car went across the border. I returned home. Abel laughed. We sold with a hundred percent profit. And in the following week, we took over from Balogh thirty-two carloads of cocoa and dumped it on the market. That brought money into our pockets. Abel allowed me fifteen percent of the profits, and I bought a little Mercedes. What we did not know and what we could not suspect was that not Balogh, but another man was furnishing the cocoa—another man, who was directing him in these activities.

BUT that only came out later. At that time I bought, as I have said, the little Mercedes; and if I am to render an account to myself and to all who read this of the singularity of my behavior of this 14th of February, I must again and again mention this automobile. For—while I had before now snatched and picked up many a tidy sum of money—that I—I!—should be the owner of an automobile was almost beyond comprehension, and this event had to be celebrated.

When I suddenly felt an attack of nausea come over me in Calé's huge parlor, where old aristocrats and fat butchers in tuxedos guzzled, where jazz-music hammered, chopped and yowled, and whores and ladies in evening clothes danced, shouted, laughed and argued—when I suddenly felt nausea coming on from the booze, I took a seat a little apart from the crowd and leaned my chair against the wall. Whenever the man at the gate gave the signal—he gave four short rings—the light, music and laughter died out for a moment. Every one grew rigid, waiting in the darkness for three or four minutes, until the patrolling policeman downstairs had passed, and with him the danger of being caught and fined for infraction of the ordinance prohibiting the use of light and coal after certain hours. When the coast was once more clear, the bell would give five short, shrill signal rings; a moment later, the shouts, laughter and disputes flared up again and the jazz-music hammered and yowled on from the point of interruption. During such an interval, in the darkness, I had seized some woman by the breast and she had seated herself astride on my thighs, but the sudden incident flickered out and passed long before the lights went on—and I, before the lights went on, stepped, in need of a breath of fresh air, into the winding corridor leading past the many wall-paper-covered doors, on the new stairway to the courtyard. From the right, from the left, through the walls and doors of these rooms, came soft moans and giggles. But not a soul was to be seen. I tore open the door to the outside and supported myself on both sides of the door-frame before which lay mysteriously the dense darkness of the staircase—stood there with the light behind me, reeling and filthy in my crumpled evening clothes, and stared into the blackness, while my alcohol-soddened brain tried in vain to remember when this identical scene had occurred once before. "Is some one out there?" I asked into the darkness. And then the jazz-music came to life again; it hammered weirdly and in torn snatches, and I sang with every crash of the cymbals—"Yeeh! Yeeh! Yeeh!"—in a shrill, animal voice that broke over me, echoing and reëchoing from the walls and ceiling of the wooden staircase. I stumbled down the steps, yanked open the door and stood in the dark courtyard.

Once more they lay around me—blind, glittering window-panes and the specters of childhood. Out of an unlighted window came the dry, hacking cough of the Gutjahr woman. Downstairs, at Badele's, was a light. Next door, at Anton's, they must have put heavy draperies before the windows and the glass door. Behind them, muffled, a number of voices. And was that not the pale glow of candles coming from the room of Frau Meier?

I heard footsteps. I pressed against the wall and saw some one pass me. It was Gutjahr. And behind him walked—no, behind him tripped—some one, now to the right, now to the left, always trying to get alongside of him. It was a fat man in evening clothes—the white shirt-front shone—with a very round head, flickering eyes and a tremulous voice. He tried to keep pace with Gutjahr, stretching out his open hand, never lowering it, as if he were pleading, begging for something; and he talked continuously, in a thin, hollow, wavering voice, in a wheedling undertone. "No!" said Gutjahr. "Give me some!" said the other. "Give me some! I have money! I'll pay for that from before, too! I have plenty of money!" He extended the paper money in his shaking fingers and dropped it into Gutjahr's hand in exchange for a tiny package, mumbled thanks or good-by, and reeled, stumbling, across the courtyard, opened the heavily curtained door leading to Anton's and disappeared. Gutjahr had also vanished, having perhaps gone to visit his mother. Now the black courtyard was empty once more.

I lurched through the archway. There, behind the glass of the porter's lodge next to the closed gate, leaning in the wide-open window and gazing over the street, was Jablonski. The Pole turned, recognized me and thrust forward a chair. "I am the look-out," he said, and pointed to the bell. From above, from Calé's apartment, came laughter and music. "Can't hear your own voice!" said Jablonski, and he pressed the button four times. Upstairs was sudden silence. The Pole laughed. "They think it's a policeman!" he said, showing his beautiful teeth. He had a bottle of brandy. Two long water glasses came forth. "I don't seem to be able to get away from the sporting-houses," he said. "I am the porter here." I raised my arm; it was so heavy and seemed so strange to me that I had to laugh. I laughed for a long time. "I have a motor!" I said. Jablonski playfully jabbed his fist into my belly, and this made me feel sick once more. The glass fell out of my hand and shattered to pieces. "That doesn't matter!" I said. "I'll give you thirty glasses to-morrow. I'll bring them to you. In the forenoon. No, in the afternoon. Will you be here? In my automobile, at four o'clock. Will four o'clock suit you?" Jablonski was touched, embraced me and cried a little. "Let's forget about them upstairs!" he said, and gave the bell five short jabs. Above us, the noises flared up again. "Yeeh!" I sang, "Yeeh!" whenever the cymbals clanked. We had only one glass left, but it was a water glass. First I drank, then he.

When the gate-bell rang, we were startled. The Pole said: "Did they really get us—?" But when we cautiously peered through the window, we saw only a solitary woman. Leaning out of the window, somewhat above her, we saw a slender girl, her hat askew, slumping as if in great weariness against the wall. Jablonski, sobered, whispered: "Some one must be chasing her!" "Are you going to let her in?" I asked. He shrugged his shoulders. "Maybe she wants to go up to Fräulein Calé's," he replied. So he went and opened the gate.

It was Mirjam. Through a fog, I saw that she was very pale. We stood to the right and left of her and laughed. "First stair to the left," said Jablonski. She looked at us out of staring eyes, and there was something in her gaze that sobered me for a moment. Without a word, she passed us, went into the courtyard and disappeared into the darkness. I wanted to drink some more, but the face of the girl, with its unguarded misery, stood so before me that I could no longer find pleasure in my drinking. Behind us, somewhere in the darkness, she was pounding with her fists against a door. A little later, voices were heard. Jablonski went over, and when he returned after five or ten minutes—by this time I was guzzling again and singing "Yeeh! Yeeh! Yeeh!" whenever the cymbals crashed—he said: "She fell down—fainted. A good-looking woman. Badele is with her. She wanted to go to Frau Meier. 'Child!' she kept moaning. Maybe she has a child there." I sang: "I'll bring you thirty glasses to-morrow in my automobile!" He snickered and jabbed me in the belly, and I felt sick. As in a bird-cage, we sat in the glass-enclosed porter's lodge and sang. I seem to remember that later I saw Badele's solemn face. He was leading Mirjam by the arm. Her hat hung crooked over her forehead and strands of hair had fallen over her staring, lifeless eyes. The quiet man brought her to the foot of Calé's staircase. He nodded to her, turned and went back across the court. When she mounted the steps, she reeled slightly and had to hold on to the banister so as not to fall. And a moment later, the music sounded suddenly more loud and shrill. The door closed with a click behind the girl who had entered.

That Mirjam arrived at the house so wild-looking, fleeing and urged on by the longing to see her child, to seek refuge, came as the climax of a trying ordeal. She had been able to keep up her relationship with Farkas for the last two or three months only artificially and by bringing the most painful sacrifices. The oily elegant was tired of her. He treated her abominably. She suffered it. On this 14th of February, he had told her to meet him at nine o'clock in the evening at their usual rendezvous. She came and entered the bed-room. On the wide bed, on the counterpane which he had been too lazy to remove, lay Farkas, in pale-blue silk pajamas. And on the edge of the bed, nude beneath a transparent kimono, sat the aristocrat who had formerly been Farkas's mistress. She sat there, her thin face grown still thinner by continued want and misery, and smiled mechanically over her tightly closed knees.

"Good evening!" said Mirjam, and remained standing at the door. Farkas, flat on his back, waved his hand in reply. The girl on the edge of the bed looked at the newcomer with shy and startled eyes. Mirjam did not move. Farkas called to her: "Why don't you come over?" And again, an edge on his voice: "Come over here!" Mirjam slowly went to him. He clutched at her, gripped her wrist and yanked her to him. She resisted. Close to her ear, he hissed: "Undress yourself!" She silently released his hand from her wrist. Brutally, he tore open her dress. She grew very calm. "Wait!" she said, and went to the little dressing-room adjacent. She slowly disrobed, piece by piece, while she heard hushed voices in the next room, heard a chair scrape and a door slam. When she, now nude, returned to the other room, she found Farkas alone. He was sitting in an armchair, smoking. "The goose ran away. I hope she croaks!" he said, in ill humor, reaching for Mirjam's arm and pulling her onto his knee. But when, with coarse words, he requested an unmentionable thing of her, something that would have—at this moment, devoid of the noble blindness of surrender—meant nothing less than a humiliating and repulsive distortion, she tore herself free and—as though suddenly ashamed of her nakedness—went over and turned out the light.

She stood, motionless, in the dark. Farkas did not move. Unaccountably, fear came over her. She felt the cold of the unheated room on her unclothed body. As she, in order to reach the dressing-room, would have to pass close to Farkas, she groped her way to the bed to pull off the cover and wrap it around her. Suddenly, she felt the hands of the man on her body; felt herself thrown backwards over the bed; felt his breath, smelling of cigarettes; felt his greasy hair against her, and before his panting that she had for many days—soberly, dispassionately—disregarded as a noxious breeze that would soon pass—before his panting that jumped like a beast at her helplessness, she found herself engulfed in a blind, bitter fury, and clawed, clawed her fingernails into his bloated face. With a choking, rasping grunt of rage, he retreated and for a moment it seemed as though he were about to pour over her a stream of filthy epithets. But then, on second thought, as though he had decided on something more suited to his purpose, he stopped abruptly; she heard him grope among the chairs, heard him gather up his clothes, heard the door open and bang shut with a vindictive slam.

She still lay on her back, naked, prone across the bed, and stared up at the dark ceiling. It was cold. She grew calmer. Sobered. And suddenly, she remembered with startling clarity she had meant to ask the man for money this evening: she had a chance to buy surreptitiously a half cart of coal, through the brother of the janitress, who was working on the railroad, where the trains of the Swedish Relief Commission arrived and the amount of coal was of necessity harder to control. And then, the dress she needed so badly. And some acquaintance had said he knew where to get her some saccharine. Oh, money—she had to have some money this evening yet! She lay in the dark and shivered with the cold and hated herself for her haughtiness. Now, when the door opened and before her, in the darkness, a slurring step entered the room, she half raised her hand toward the silhouette of the approaching person, whispering: "Emmerich! . . . Emmerich!" She received no answer. She arose, stood slender and nude and trembling in the darkness, and blindly extended her open hands into the night. "Emmerich!" she said, and something broke in her voice.

And then, suddenly, she stood in the pitiless glare of the electric bulbs. This was not Farkas. It was Farkas's manservant, his bravo, his confidant, who was also in charge of these assignation rooms. Out of his broad, overfed servant's face goggled two slitty, colorless eyes, shamelessly examining the nude body of the paralyzed girl. He offered her two greenish dollar bills, and said: "Here!" Then, grinning: "Here! Two dollars! Herr Farkas had nothing smaller. And if you ever come here again, he'll throw you down the stairs!" When Mirjam remained motionless, he crossed over to the bed, deliberately touching her body in passing, and placed the two bills on the pillow. Then, he suddenly turned, clicked his tongue and said: "Well?"

At last the paralyzed girl came to life. Her eyes widened. She cowered in the armchair in which Farkas had been sitting; she pulled up her knees, tried to protect her breasts from his gaze with her hands, and at last tore the little lace cover off the table and held it before her. The man took a step toward her and grinned. "Where is Herr Farkas?" she asked him with bloodless lips. "He left," said the man, and grinned and took another step forward. She said tonelessly: "Get out!" He did not answer, but grinned. "Not so loud!" he said, his voice suddenly husky, and came a step closer. He reached for her. She pushed him aside, ran—his panting behind her—ran and reached the dressing-room, slammed the door and locked it in feverish haste, before the man, frenzied with rage and ruttishness, hurled himself against the wood. "Open!" he panted. Mirjam stood in the farthest corner of the little room and quivered at every dull thud against the door.

She found her underwear, her dress, her coat. Her hands trembled. A shoe fell out of her hand, and it startled her as though a cannon had been fired. At last, she was dressed. And while the beast outside hammered with his fists against the partition and stammered threats, protestations and promises, Mirjam tiptoed through the bath-room and—the thumps grew more violent—into the corridor. She raced down the stairs and out. Through night-deserted streets she staggered. Visions pursued her—she ran on. She saw the river and the bridge; she leaned, breathing heavily, against the railing and watched the dark, lazy water underneath flow by. No, not that! something said within her. And then she found herself before the old house and in the archway—"Yeeh!" I howled, "Yeeh!" while upstairs the jazz-music wailed—and found herself in the courtyard, clamoring against a door, whimpering: "Child!" whimpering: "Child!"—and was forced once more to smile a burnt-out smile and to climb, with the hip-twisting step of the prostitute, to the house of Fräulein Calé, which opened its door to her.

What Mirjam did not know at that time was that her break with Farkas had, in the same hour, the worst possible consequences. The newspaperman, choking with rage, had hardly dressed himself in the anteroom, had hardly given his man the message for Mirjam, when he, slave to the wheel of his day, hastened to his office, despite the late hour.

An unfortunate coincidence so contrived it that Feuerbach, on this evening, substituted for the sick assistant of the night editor—and that he encountered the furious, vengeance-breathing Farkas on the stairs. On the stairs, therefore, shaking beneath the stamping of the presses, this scene took place. Farkas said: "Good that I see you! Your daughter, the dirty sow, scratched my face!" Feuerbach grew pale and leaned heavily against the balustrade. "Sir!" he brought forth with difficulty. Farkas, without paying the slightest attention to the old man's confusion and completely taken up with himself, continued: "In bed! In bed, she suddenly digs her claws into my eyes! I should have turned her over to the police!" Feuerbach felt his knees give way, and held himself upright on the banister. And suddenly a voice he did not recognize as his own tore itself loose from between his lips and shrilled, breaking: "Liar!" For a moment, Farkas was taken aback. Then he screeched: "What a nerve! What are you trying to give me, you pimp! Smuggles himself into my office between the legs of his own daughter, and then plays the innocent! No! Oh, no! I engaged you for your talents, you fool! 'Liar,' am I? Don't make me vomit, you slimy worm! You, together with your whore-daughter, belong behind bars!" Feuerbach stammered something that could not be understood. He raised his arm in a weak, wavering gesture and struck at the other's face. The feeble blow—was it from the semi-blindness or the benumbing agitation of the man?—fell, hardly more than a touch, upon the shoulder of the newspaperman. Raging, Farkas struck him in the face with his clenched fist. The old man fell—fell against the balustrade, sank upon the stairs and rolled down ten or fifteen steps before he lay still. When he arose, after seconds of blessed unconsciousness, with bleeding face, some one gave him his old hat and his thin coat and led the reeling man to the door. Feuerbach found himself on the street.

From this point, his movements are not clear. It is established, however, that he—about two hours later—entered his house, that he lighted the stump of a candle which he carried in his overcoat pocket and started to climb the stairs. On the way up to his apartment, he passed the rooms of Frau Wagner, whose husband had died ten days before from the Spanish influenza. When his steps became audible on the stairs, her door opened and Frau Wagner who, notwithstanding the late hour, must have stood waiting behind it, came out. Herr Feuerbach bade her good evening. "It's you!" said Frau Wagner. There was a hectic flush on her face. "I thought it was my daughter, coming home. I am afraid! I awoke with a fever; I called my daughter; I went to her room; she is gone!" She placed her hands against her burning cheeks and said, in a low voice: "Can this be the grippe?" And then old Feuerbach took her to her bed, put compresses on her forehead and held the hand of the sick woman in his until she fell asleep. About one o'clock, the daughter came in. The outer door opened carefully—oh, so carefully! Then, she tiptoed across the vestibule. In passing, the girl must have noticed the light in her mother's room, for she stood still; then, came and opened the door. Her eyes widened in sudden alarm when she saw Feuerbach sitting at the bed of her sleeping mother. The old man put his finger to his lips, cautioning her to silence, and smiled reassuringly. The girl stood before him as she had returned from her secret errand, a cheap hand-bag hanging on her arm, an attempt at brazenness in her whole make-up. When she noticed him scrutinizing her with solemn eyes, her gaze fell and she smiled foolishly. It so happened that Feuerbach was looked upon in the house as a comparatively well-to-do man. So, when he now arose and, with unsteady hands, pulled out his wallet and said: "If you will allow me—I won some money to-day—" it did not seem any too strange. But there were only three or four small bills in the thin portefeuille. He extracted them with clumsy fingers and put them on the edge of the table. He nodded and left.

He did not go up to his apartment. He went down to the outer gate. He opened and closed it, and it creaked and creaked good-by. On the street, he stood still for a moment. Then he moaned softly, as children sometimes moan. His lips formed a word that wafted into space. His shoulders slumped pathetically, and he reeled against the night wind.

OF all this, Mirjam knew nothing when the door of the Calé house closed behind her; and much of what occurred to her in there I saw with my own eyes, but my senses were then so muddled by the befogging veils of alcohol that, try as I will, only pictures, scraps of pictures, as one sees them looking down upon the flatlands from the top of a mountain through sailing clouds, appear before my backward gaze.

First of all: I must have taken leave of Jablonski in the porter's lodge. Perhaps the bottle was empty. And I must have groped my way back to Calé's apartment, for I can see myself standing at the shore of a stream of dancers, who swirled and eddied by me in little whirlpools of jerks, shoves and gliding steps—see myself stretched out at full length in a comfortable armchair. Behind me, in the shadow of a corner, sit two. The tuxedoed butcher has squeezed his hand into the opening of Mirjam's dress and lifts her right breast, so that the tender skin beneath it is painfully spanned. He purrs close to her ear like a tomcat, asking: "Have you been at it very long?" A pale smile emerges from her. A voice presses itself out of her: "Not very long. Two or three months!" He tugs at her left breast, asking: "What brought you to it?" A pale smile emerges from her. A high-pitched voice answers: "Father died. Mother died." He pants and asks: "Couldn't you have married?"—and forces his hand between her knees. A pale smile emerges from her. Out of her a voice answers: "I was engaged. He fell in the war. He was a major, a flyer." He becomes calmer, shoves his hand into his pocket, and says: "You should start a new life. Dressmaker—or sell newspapers. It's not much, but it's honest." A pale smile emerges from her. "Yes!" she says, and nods. "Yes!" and nods. And when he abruptly gets up, she says, very low: "Aren't you going to give me something?" But he is already pushing through the crowd toward the exit. "Yeeh!" I sang, "Yeeh!" whenever the bony drummer crashed the cymbals.

They still turned out the lights when the bell shrilled four times. But no one really believed in danger any more. Only the lights went out. The music kept on yowling, the dancers stumbled ahead—shrieks and laughter filled the darkness. And then, in the midst of the blackness—the saxophone executed a brassy trill which sounded like the death-squeak of a stuck pig—just as I was shoving the fifth cigar between my teeth and the match flickered up for a moment, I saw Mirjam's face. Nothing but Mirjam's face. Around me, the reveling room sank back into darkness. Her unguarded, harassed face, the hunted face of a cornered doe, opened in a frenzied scream and jerked away from a clawing hand, covered with reddish hair and chopped off at the wrist by the white edge of a cuff. The match went out. All was dark, and the cymbals crashed. "Yeeh!" I sang, "Yeeh!"

What took place the third time I saw her was scandalous and incomprehensible. How can it be explained that suddenly—while the glare of the electric lights flooded the milling crowd—Mirjam burst forth from the next room (her auburn hair streaming over her face) and that she, in the center of the room, in the open space before the podium, with a shrill cry tore the dress from her body! She loosened no clasp, loosened no fastening. She tore the dress, tore it from top to bottom and stamped on the red rags. And while this scene was still enjoyed with screeching laughter by the revelers, the applause died out abruptly, for Mirjam now screamed. Tore the shirt off her shoulders and screamed. Stood there naked and screamed. The music broke off. The dancing stopped. Shocked, rigid silence. Mirjam stood there in naked nakedness, her eyes closed. Screams came from deep within her, screams out of her white face. She threw herself backward upon the floor and screamed: "Here!—Everybody! Here!—Anybody who wants me!"

There was dead silence. A boy's voice rose in a giggle and stopped, afraid of its own sound. Silence. Mirjam's head hung far over, as if severed. She laughed shrilly, and tears ran down her cheeks. Into the silence, a man said: "This won't do!" A coat lay spread over a chair. He took it and, stiffly, keeping far away from her, placed it over the girl with outstretched arms. His hands were covered with reddish hair and were chopped off at the wrists by his white cuffs. Then came three or four, who carried the hysterical girl into another room. With that, they all tried to forget the incident. But the hilarity refused to come back. Only I, I, I—"Yeeh!" I sang, "Yeeh!" whenever the bony drummer crashed the cymbals together.

As it was, the party broke up quicker than had been expected. The bell shrilled four times, but as they had grown tired of the darkness, no one paid any attention to the signal. Only when the detectives appear in the suddenly opened door, does the crowd fly apart. Had I been sober, it would have startled me to see Johannes Abel's face among the police officers. Fräulein Calé comes and flutters. Some one shouts at her. She shuts up. One of the gentlemen tries to disclose his identity. They pay no attention to him. It is plain that the raid concerns something other than the illegal consumption of light and foodstuffs. Three or four broad-toes have searched the rooms, and return. Calé wails and questions. Some one barks at her: "Cocaine! Where are the cocaine sniffers?" Her hands flutter in protest. Some one commands: "Nothing? No one? Bring them all in here!" Five or six broad-toes disappear. Knocking can be heard. They knock on the doors with their fists. A shout somewhere, a woman's voice. Somewhere, the splintering of wood. A man spits curses. Calé shrieks and tries to leave, but they hold her. Knocking, knocking. Then the broad-toes return, driving before them a dozen half-naked women and men. They place them in a row against the wall. All are pale. Names are called and written down. Some one protests. A woman faints. The last of the detectives returns out of the rooms. "That's all!" he reports. The leader turns to Abel: "Is he among them?" Abel shakes his head. The leader demands: "Does anybody here know a Ruben Feuerbach?" Silence.

I, I laugh at them from my armchair; and only now Abel sees me and comes over to me. He talks—I do not grasp much of it. Ruben had been with him that evening. Had been called downstairs: a man was waiting. Had not returned. "He is not at home. I was there. There's no one at home—no one opens. I must find him. He has something to do with cocaine. In his overcoat pocket was cocaine. He went without his overcoat." I laughed into his agitated face. I sang: "And the police, my darling? Well, well! Do you think the police will find him? Who can tell!"—the refrain of a song out of the "Shimmy Prince." I laughed. He said: "I reported it. He must be here—" Then he stopped, for he saw that I was drunk. The leader of the detectives had also come over, and said to Abel: "A few days ago, they found a skull at the mouth of the sewer. The sewer passes under this house." Abel started, then he pulled himself together. "He was still with me this evening," he said softly to himself. I laughed: "A skull? That comes from Anton." "Anton?" I sang: "In the cellar of the rear-house. The boy-murderer in the rear-house! I'll take you to him in my automobile!" "Drunk!" said the detective, and turned away. But Abel stayed. He bent over me, asking in a shaking voice: "Do you believe that Ruben is with Anton?" "Ruben is with Anton?" I mimicked him. "Yeeh!" I sang, "Yeeh!" Then they seized me by the arms and dragged me along to the rear-house.

In the courtyard, they cuffed me and told me harshly to stop my singing. Like weasels, like cats, we sneaked closer. The safety catch of a revolver clicked beside me. Door and windows were heavily draped. But the door had cracks. We crouched low. Through the tiny slit I could see —one after the other—four cots. Around the electric bulb, hanging from the ceiling and guarded by a wire-netting, they had hung a brown paper-bag, so that the room swam in a murky light. The first two cots and the fourth were unoccupied. On the third sat the skinny one with the swallow-head: Wurmbrand. There he sat, dreadfully shrunken, with corpse-like body, hollows of hunger where his cheeks should have been, caverns instead of eyes, and his gaze came from far within the blackness as a tiny light from within a mine. He sat there and smiled into space. Sat there in silence and swayed, now to the right, now to the left. His lips moved silently but rapidly, as if talking to the wall. Was he reciting? And now he nodded and raised his salamander-fingers into the air, and gestured as though an unseen audience had applauded. Next to me, a detective whispered: "Cocaine!"

Then we threw open the door and entered. Wurmbrand looked up, but did not see us. He was nodding. But to the right, next to the wall, in the part of the room we did not see through the crack in the door, two men hastily jumped up from their cots. One of them, withered and dull of face, had a potato sack pulled around his shoulders. He was trembling. When one of the detectives asked him his name, his teeth began to chatter loudly and he could not answer. The other seemed familiar to me. He was armless and had a wooden leg. He stood at attention, and was apparently sober. But there some one lay on a board with open eyes—a man in evening clothes, a fat man with a very round head, and he squirmed, moaning softly, and smiled into space. "Cocaine!" some one said. They all had little white packages with them. "Where did you get it?" No answer. The skinny one on the cot smiled and smiled. And then I could hold myself in check no longer. I lifted my voice. "Yeeh!" I sang, "Yeeh!"

The door of the little room flies open. There crouches Anton. When he sees the detectives, he starts, but remains very calm. "What can I do for you gentlemen?" he says slowly, and slowly comes down the four steps. The broad-toe barks at him: "Where is Ruben Feuerbach?" Anton does not answer. I lurch up to him and look through the open door into his room. He shoves me aside, but already I have seen that some one is lying in the bed, his face turned to the wall, motionless. I could only see the ear and part of the cheek. And the arm, oddly bent backwards, stretched blue-white on the pillow. "There!" I shout. "There!" The broad-toe makes a move to enter. Anton fills the doorway and growls darkly: "Hold on, fellow! Don't go in there!"

And at the same moment, Gutjahr appears. He might possibly have been sitting, unseen by us, in a corner of the room. Now he stands there, in the light, aroused, at bay, insolent, and says: "Good evening, gentlemen! May I see the warrant?" The broad-toe: "You'll see it soon enough! Get out of the way! We are going to search the place!" Gutjahr sneers: "Search the place? At night—without a search-warrant? Hofrat Blech will be glad to hear of this, Inspector Müller. It will cost you your job. This isn't the first blunder you've made!" Müller gasps. "How do you know me?" he asks, and he peers closely at him: "You—it's you?" He walks over to Gutjahr and shakes his hand. "A mistake!" he says and, turning sharply to Abel: "You, there! What do you mean by bringing the police on a wild goose chase? Who are you, anyway?" And, louder: "Show me your papers!" Gutjahr grins: "I know the gentleman." But Müller writes down Abel's address. He looks around. He would like to retreat, seeks for an excuse to get away, and barks: "Take those pigs, the cocaine fiends, and bring them to the station!" And, following the broad-toes, who drag the babbling, half-awake wretches with them, he clumps out of the place. Gutjahr, his hat at a rakish angle, follows, whistling. Only Anton remains, his face a mask.

By this time, I was sitting quietly on one of the cots—I felt ill once more. Anton closed his door and leaned against it. Abel stood to the right against the wall, there where the cocaine addicts had been. His face looked very old; his cheeks were slightly sunken. He had kept silent during the arrest. One could see that he was very tired. He said: "You know where Ruben is!" No answer. He said: "Ruben is inside! Ruben is inside on the bed. Wake him up! I must talk to him!" No answer. He rasped: "Call him out of there! I am your landlord! I'll throw you out on the street! I'll have you arrested, if you don't let him out of there!" Then, Anton opened his mouth and said: "Shut up, old man, or you'll find a knife between your ribs!" "I am not afraid of you!" Abel shouted; but suddenly he grew very weak and had to sit down on one of the cots. He started to say something, but did not. There was silence. Then, very softly: "Listen! I am a rich man. I will pay you well. I am an old man. Let me have the child!" I looked over at Anton and was surprised to see the change that had come over his face. He was pale and serious. He said: "I don't give a damn for your money! No! —Even if he were here! But he is not here." Abel rose slowly and said: "You don't trust me! I am telling you the truth. I swear it! When one is as old as I and knows that one will soon stand before God's throne of judgment, one does not swear falsely. You shall be a rich man! I have a lot of money; more money than anybody thinks. Leave the boy alone! He is going to ruin. I want the boy with me." And then a strange thing happened—so strange that I nearly vomited with sudden laughter—Abel, Johannes Abel, kneeled in the middle of the filthy floor and raised his hands, as if he were going to pray, plead, beg! But then he came to himself, and he pounded his chest many times with his clenched fist and shouted wildly: "Me! Me! With me!"

At that, the door opened—not the door to Anton's room, but the other, the outer door, and Ruben Feuerbach stood in the room. His hat was on crooked, his eyes shimmered and he was laughing softly to himself. Slowly, he came down the steps, and he reeled slightly. He was very beautiful at that moment. And it was singular that he did not seem to see either me, who lay sprawling on the cot, or Abel, who rose, his features twitching with happy emotion. With small steps, Ruben went up to Anton, holding out his open hand, palm upward, before him, a pleading expression on his face. "Give!" he said. We did not move. "Give!" said Ruben. And, seriously, in a very low voice: "Gutjahr gave you a little package for me.—Give!" he said again. But then he forgot about his request, and when he reeled slightly, he laughed at himself. He staggered to and fro, his hands groping in weak circles about the room, as if he were dancing on the filthy floor of the lodging place, as if he were floating, all ecstatic and weightless, above chasms. But he soon exhausted himself and, breathing heavily, leaned against the wall. He was not aware of Abel's and my presence. He did not know Abel and me at all. A heavy, damp, shivering silence brooded in the room.

Then Anton, his face once more expressionless, held out his hand to the resting boy. "There!" he said, shortly. And Abel—on legs that almost refused to carry him—crossed over to Ruben. He put his shaking hand on the boy's shoulder and said: "Ruben!" and again: "Ruben!" and whispered in a breaking voice: "Don't you know me?" The boy looked smilingly into his face and nodded. "Then you'll come with me?" Abel asked, very faintly. Ruben nodded, and laughed softly. But when Abel, in shy happiness, took him by the arm and led him toward the door, the youth tore himself free and threw himself face downward on a cot. "Sleep!" he said. Anton waddled over to him, his face staring sideways into space, and clumsily stroked his hair. And when Abel endeavored to raise the sleep-drunk boy, it came about that the hands of the two men touched for a moment: on the shrunken, yellowish white old hand of Johannes Abel rested broad and heavy the red paw of Anton. Then they lifted the smiling sleeper and carried him outside to Abel's waiting automobile. I staggered after them over the unlighted courtyard. "Yeeh!" I sang, "Yeeh!" and the sound rattled back to me a hundredfold from the blind, startled window-panes. Four shy tapers flickered in Frau Meier's room.

ONLY much later it occurred to me that during the tumult occasioned by the police in the Calé house Mirjam had not been visible. She had disappeared. It is possible that she had taken advantage of the general confusion to leave unnoticed; it is also possible that—before this event—she had been able to pass Jablonski, who was dead drunk. The next thing known about her is that she arrived at the Feuerbach house. She must have walked all the way, for the street-cars did not run at that hour. When she pushed the key into the lock of the outer door, a woman leaned out of the unlighted window upstairs. "Mirjam?"

Frau Feuerbach called down to her in a whisper. "Are you alone?" "Yes." Another whisper: "Stay there! I'll be down!" A minute later, she had joined her daughter. She had thrown a shawl around her shoulders and shivered with the cold. "Father is gone!" she whispered; and then: "He was in the house, but he didn't come upstairs. He is gone!" Mirjam was silent. The woman continued: "I went to the newspaper office." And: "I spoke with Farkas." And then: "You needn't say anything." Mirjam was silent. The woman passed her hand gently over Mirjam's sleeve. "I have known about the child for a long time," she breathed. Oh, Mirjam was silent. The woman said: "We must look for Father." Side by side, they went through the empty, echoing, dimly lighted streets. No, at the police station they knew nothing. Some man fussily wrote down particulars, and they had to tell him slowly what he was to put slowly on paper. "Underwear?" he asked. And: "Do you think he committed suicide?" And then they left, again walking side by side. The coffee houses were closed. In silence they walked, in silence. At a street corner, there was commotion. The Salvation Army had invaded a dive frequented by pimps, and now the rowdies were having their fun with the women. "Jesus, my Saviour!" they sang nasally. A jazz band blared raucously. A thin, white-haired old woman, withered and eaten away by misery, rags bound around her shoes, this old woman—Fräulein Kurila was her name—had climbed upon a chair and commenced to speak. Some one poured a glass of beer down the neck of her dress. Cymbals and drums chopped the hymn to pieces. The glaring brilliance of the acetylene lamps reflected from the calcimined walls. Paper streamers fluttered and rustled. No one knew anything about Feuerbach. In silence, the two women walked on.

At a corner, Mirjam turned to the right. Frau Feuerbach did not question her. She knew the way led to the river.

Upstream they went, along the rolling blackness. Here and there were dark figures on the sloping grass. A grunt. A lifted head and a curse. Now they were in the neighborhood of the old house. There, down at the shore, a crowd gathered, of creatures that shun the light. What? No, only Mirjam ran. Her mother suddenly felt faint. Her legs refused to carry her. She sank upon the sloping grass. . . . Oh, it was nothing. This was only the outlet of the sewer. They had only fished some bones out of it—a thigh bone and a skull. Some one raised it playfully on a stick and attempted to walk off with it, but the police took it away from him.

When Mirjam returned to her mother, the woman was gazing blankly into space. "To-morrow is Thursday," she said in a low voice, and her face was severe. "To-morrow, I'll have to stand in line for some meat." They were silent for a long time. At a street corner, Mirjam said: "Now, you must go home!" The eyes of her mother asked: "Not you? Not you?" Mirjam was silent. Thus, they parted.

Who can go further? Who suspects the abyss? "Your dress is torn!" said the butcher. What's my dress to you?—The boy was alarmed and depraved. And he with the spectacles: "Are you at it long?" "Not long. Two or three months. Father died. Mother died." "You should take in washing or be a nurse. Poor, but honest." "Yes!" something within her moaned faintly: "Yes! Yes!"

The dreary dawn already crouches on the housetops when she returns home. Cautious—and more cautious still. Wardrobe and chair stand cold and lonesome in the gray morning fog. Yes, Mother is home, sleeping with gasping breath: she has a nightmare. Away with this coat—with this dress! Father's bed is empty. Oh, you naked body, you strange animal, you weary animal! Throw yourself down on the couch and stop thinking! Think this: somewhere there breathes a child. Sleep, my baby, sleep!

Is that noise in the street? Is that music? Stagger up and go to the window. Music! Throw open the window; lean out! Music! There they come around the corner! A mass of people in tattered clothes. Men. Women, children in their arms. They walk in march tempo. Standards flutter, standards! Always new crowds come into the street. They are singing! As yet, you cannot understand what they are singing. But the rhythm, the measured rhythm alone swells your heart! The discordant, wild, sad, piercing melody alone is near to bursting your heart, and you shout, shout and wave, shout and let your torn whore-dress flutter over the street in the wind, in the wind . . .

BOOK TWO

THE SLIDE

FISSURE IN THE WALL

AT the beginning of the following week, Abel sent for me and said: "I want my accounts balanced—a private report." I took over the work personally, but when I brought him the result five days later, he hardly listened to me. I had left out the dubious accounts, had written twenty percent off the solvent accounts, thirty percent off the present value of the stocks he owned, had entered the real estate—the houses in Berlin!—at cost, had estimated the immense timber-tracts at a third of their value, had put aside a reserve fund for the usual taxes and one for excess taxes, a reserve for income taxes and one for lawyers' fees—and yet the audit showed a fortune of fifty-nine million three hundred thousand gold kronen. I read out figure after figure. "Thanks," said Abel, without paying much attention to me. He looked seedy and as if suffering from lack of sleep, and I recalled the rumor that he spent most of his time, since he had found Ruben that night and brought him home, in dens of ill repute; that he was even seen loitering around in front of such dives. It was common knowledge that he had made desperate, but unsuccessful efforts to free the boy from his vice. In the anguish of a belated and all-absorbing paternal love, he had used threats and pleas, promises and commands, to no effect. Abel had to stand by, despairing and powerless, and watch his beautiful boy, in the grip of his fatal addiction, sink deeper and deeper into fog, deeper and deeper into degradation.

Gradually, imperceptibly, a dreadful thing had come about. Ruben, who, it is said, had begun the fearful descent with conscious purpose, wishing to kill the flesh so that the spirit might rule, was now completely helpless. Feeble yet exacting was the body to which he was chained. In the spurious physical strength of narcotic delirium, in the horrible sufferings of the prostrating reaction, the boy had a terrifying, an uncanny perception of human frailties. In his little note-book, found later, there are four pages covered with the ravings of this period. Over the four pages, spotted with liquor, is penciled in sprawling letters at least twenty times the one word: "Crushed! Crushed!" Only at rare intervals now was Ruben's mind clear. In this book, hardly visible beneath the stains of some kind of drink, stand the words: "The other star?" No one had the slightest idea what it meant. "I am going to see your people," Abel said to him. Ruben answered: "Do not cling to one merely because he is of your blood. You shall cling to all. I am no longer with my people. I am alone." "Live with me!" said Abel. Ruben said: "Do you not cling to me. I am alone!" "You have been alone a long while," said Abel, "long enough. It is a sin. A sin upon my shoulders," Abel whispered. Ruben said, and his dulled eyes glowed, "On my shoulders let me take the sin! Let me take your sin to myself!" Then again delirium seized him and his soul was lost and lamented in darkness. Abel was silent. The rumor that he had made the boy his sole heir was soon proved false.

But one thing was certain: Abel paid no more attention to business. "Use your own judgment," he said, whenever I came to him for a decision. I used my own judgment. After Balogh had delivered the ninety-first carload of smuggled cocoa, he suddenly ceased coming. I wrote to him, but he stayed away. So I had to find something else. A large quantity of the half-spoiled canned goods was offered to me. As the De Letter deal was still on and I did not want him to get into this, I bought the new lot through a dummy and dumped it on the market through another, at some ten percent below the De Letter goods. The money needed for the payment of these preserved meats I raised with the help of a little juggling. I had about four million Abel shares at my disposal—they were quoted at 2,200, and therefore worth eight and three quarter billion. These shares I took to a large, old and very reputable savings bank and asked for a loan—concerns of that kind are overflowing with money and eager for good investments. They granted me a loan of two-thirds the value: I received six billion. After this deal had been closed, I said: "As this is our first transaction, I am going voluntarily to give you a mortgage as additional security." The old banker with whom I was dealing was pleased at such a display of sincerity. He accepted my offer. I gave the savings bank a mortgage on the old house for six billion—it was worth no more than four million. There was no necessity for them to appraise the real estate, as the loan was more than covered by the Abel shares. After a week, I paid back the loan. The mortgage? The savings bank wanted to have it canceled. I said: "Canceled? I think I'll save the cost of cancellation. Just transfer the mortgage to me. A simple assignment." They did. I sent this assignment, plus an affidavit from the registry office, to Berlin, to a small banker, whose clients were mostly tax dodgers. No one with money wanted to be known as a creditor. It was easier to get along in the dark. And to have a mortgage, assigned by a solid, conservative savings bank, was a rare opportunity to sink one's capital from view. If it was good enough for them, one need have no qualms. I assigned the mortgage to Herr Peschke, of Wilmersdorf, and received six billion in cash. With this, I paid for the canned goods. But De Letter found out that the Abel Works were underselling their own syndicate. He raved and dissolved the partnership by the simple process of halving the remaining goods. Then, seeking vengeance, he used his half to ruin the market by offering them at reduced prices. I cut my prices still lower. He went far below me. Then, through a dummy, I bought, at a ridiculously low figure. When I held everything, I made my own prices. The money thereby realized I used to buy cocoa shells in great quantities. These I had ground to powder, and this powder I sold at eighteen thousand kronen per kilo, as supposedly smuggled cocoa powder of the best quality, to seven wholesalers in the provinces. When they received the merchandise and threatened difficulties, I hinted, through a middleman, at prosecution for receiving smuggled goods. I heard no more from them. Their notes, which I had received in advance, I endorsed to a dummy, to prevent any possibility of non-payment. This money I wanted for the erection of a department store in Berlin, on a site where Abel owned a block of houses; but the agent wrote me that he had sold the houses at our request a month before and had bought shares in a Spandau development with the money. I had been under the impression that these shares had been paid for with fourteen carloads of alcohol. Now it came out that the alcohol was still lying in Passau. Ducrède took them over. That was the time I bought the big Mercedes and furnished an apartment for the Késmarki girl, one of the "Three Washburns." Bloch gave me the furniture on a note. Now, I also took stock of my resources. I had about a million gold kronen. One morning, the bailiff surprised me while I was still in bed. I had paid no income tax. He seized everything in sight. What was I to do? Little Pinkas was just going into bankruptcy. I talked with him, and then reported a large claim for goods delivered. Thus, I could prove a loss and had to pay no taxes. Pinkas managed to extract quite a handsome sum from me for making possible such a cheap settlement, and Késmarki received six dozen pair of silk stockings from Pinkas's store.

And then, one forenoon, I had an unexpected visitor: Samuel Klein. The man looked wretched and neglected, as if he had slept in his clothes. With a jesting remark, I invited him to sit down. He remained standing. "Don't!" he said. "I must see Abel!" I laughed: "Abel? Your deadly enemy?" He said: "Don't! I must see him! Now! At once! Within two hours, we may all be arrested!" This alarmed me; I went to Abel. Abel happened to be in his office. The curtains were drawn tight; the room was in semi-darkness. "My eyes hurt," he explained. I said: "Klein wants to see you." He made a motion with his hand—consent or refusal—but already the little man was standing in the doorway. He barely nodded, locked the door, crossed the room with little, nervous steps, and peered behind the curtains, as if suspecting a listener there. Then, he sat down. For a moment, the room was silent, except for the clamor in the street outside. Then, Klein threw his head forward from his crooked shoulder. "You have smuggled ninety-four carloads of cocoa!" he said. I laughed heartily. "You're drunk!" I said. Klein chopped his flat hand through my laughter. "No nonsense, now!" he said. "You think Balogh sold them to you. I sold! I! Balogh was my agent!" This looked bad. We said nothing.

Then, Abel raised his head and said, in a low voice: "Why?" And then an odd thing happened. Klein—quiet, sober Klein—sprang up and pounded his fist on the table. "Because I hate you!" he screeched. "Because I hate you! Because I wanted to drag you down; to see you hooked, in the net, caught! Because I wanted to crush you—like this!—between my fingers!" He stood and stared out of inflamed eyes. "Because I hate you!" he said once more, very slowly, and sank back into his chair. And then, the second odd thing happened: With a little gesture, Abel raised his hand gently, and asked: "Why?" A heavy silence pervaded the darkened room. Outside, the street-car clanked and rattled. Klein did not answer. Abel's white head had sunk forward and he seemed to be thinking hard, for a long time. "You have cut your own throat, if you've cut ours!" I said. Klein nodded repeatedly, and said in a whisper: "That makes no difference!" Abel looked up again; looked him in the eye. "You hate me as much as that?" he said, and he also nodded, as if he understood. Understood. A heavy silence pervaded the darkened room. Then, I said: "You know that you will be sent up, if we are. Then, why did you do this?" Then, the third odd thing happened: Klein looked at me like a crazy person and said: "Now—now, I can't go on! I can't go on!" And then he told us.

It was indeed the truth that he had set a trap for Abel. It was indeed the truth that he had counted upon the possibility of exposing himself to danger, if Abel should crash. But suddenly, something else had come about—he barely hinted at this, and at the time it was impossible to surmise what it could be—something that held him impotent, that made him shun all danger, that made him weak; something that was strong enough to overcome his ten-year-old hatred of Abel, that made him forego the triumph so close at hand. But neither Abel nor I had time to muse over this. We had to cope with facts. One fact was that this Klein, like a hunted animal, fearing for his freedom, had come to us for protection. It was also a fact that he had cause for such fear. The circumstance that he had given his agent orders to drop the transactions threatened danger. Geza Balogh had accustomed himself to making money. This sudden cessation of the cocoa smuggling he considered an interference with his personal rights. He considered it attack; an act of enmity, demanding retribution and vengeance. "You'll go to jail, and the others will go, too!" he had shouted into Klein's face. And from the stairway: "You know what you are? A duty dodger! I'll report it! Me afraid? Me? When I report? Herr Balogh, they'll say, you've saved the country!" With that, he was gone. This incident had happened half an hour ago. "I came right over," concluded Klein. "First, I felt like taking a train. But I can't leave. Not now!"

He broke off and reached for a glass of water standing on the desk. His hand trembled. The two of us looked expectantly at Abel. He had been sitting silently behind his desk, drawing long lines across the blotter. When Klein ended his narrative, he gave a slight start. He looked at his watch and rose. "You'll have to excuse me, now," he said, quickly, in a somehow strange voice. He reached for his hat and coat. Then, turning to us, as if remembering something: "Yes—that is bad business. No doubt, you two will know what has to be done. Perhaps a lawyer, don't you think? I have no time, just now." He went to the window and pulled back the curtains to look down upon the street. "Is it raining?" he asked, absent-mindedly. He nodded, and went past us to the door. When it had closed behind him, we sat in silence. Only when a klaxon sounded close beneath the window did Klein pull himself together. "We must do what we can," he said. "Everything on my shoulders! Who can understand the man! Abel won't lift a finger." And, slowly, he repeated: "Do what we can!" and nodded. His eyes were inflamed.

We did what could be done. The spurious customs papers—I kept them in a strong-box—we could no longer use as an alibi. We decided to destroy them. Klein came with me and we locked ourselves in my room. Since there was steam-heat and no stove, we burned each paper singly, swept the ashes together and blew them out of the window. When we did this for the second time, Klein, paling, jumped back from the window. "There!" he said, trembling. Below stood a policeman, looking up. I calmed him. We sat down at the table for a moment and considered what to do.

"Have you any cash money?" asked Klein. There was not much at my disposal. "We need a lot of money," said Klein. "We'll have to be prepared to pay the customs duty on ninety-four carloads at a moment's notice." I asked: "Must it be cash? The banks are closed. Won't a cheque do?" Klein shifted nervously in his chair. "Customs duties must be paid in cash."

He thought, went to the telephone, and called a cloth merchant. "How about the goods I saw yesterday? How much? Will you take my note for it? What—payable in a week? Very well! Don't go away. I'll be over." He left by the rear door. I instructed the telephone girl to tell all callers that I was out; that I had gone to Cracow, to the factory. Then, I sent the secretary away on a complicated errand, and locked myself in her room. I had conceived an idea which promised salvation. Klein and I would have to be made to appear unsuspecting, innocent victims. This was possible only if I succeeded in putting all the guilt on Balogh. But how could Balogh have been guilty? I thought hard, sat down at a typewriter, and wrote three letters, the tone of them increasingly angry. I composed three letters, supposedly written by Klein, addressed to Balogh. The first one read that Klein sent Balogh the money "enclosed" for the duty to be paid on the cocoa, belonging to him, Klein, and sold by Balogh. The second was an angry letter, requesting immediately the proceeds of the sale. Why had Balogh not sent the proceeds of the sale of the duty-paid and delivered cocoa? And the third, dated the same day, was a threat: "Balogh, if you do not deliver within three hours the money for the duty-paid cocoa which you sold for me, I will place the matter before the Public Prosecutor!"

I read the three letters with extreme satisfaction. They were perfect. They would prove that Balogh had received from Klein the money to pay the duty, and had then embezzled both this and the proceeds of the sale. The original letters I burned—it must appear that Balogh had received them. The copies, the evidence, I kept. Klein was protected.

And now I changed typewriters. I wrote three more letters, addressed to Balogh by the Abel Works. The first: "The cocoa we bought from you is not, as you said, of inferior, but of the finest quality. We realize that the price we paid is too low for first-class cocoa. We do not infer that there is anything wrong, but there is a lot of talk about smuggling. We would like to see the custom-house receipts." The tone of the second letter was sharper: "You continue putting us off. You told us the cocoa was bought from the receiver of a bankrupt house, thus explaining the low price. Bring us the proof! And once more, we insist upon the custom-house receipts." And the third, dated twenty-four hours before: "Balogh, if we haven't the custom-house receipt by to-morrow, we will be forced to report you as suspected of smuggling!"

That sufficed. Again, I burned the originals. The copies I filed. Now, let Balogh report! Now, let them come! When Klein returned after an hour's absence with a hand-bag full of paper money—he had bought four billion kronen worth of Czechoslovakian cloth on two weeks' credit and had turned it over to another wholesaler for two and a half billion cash—I was in a position to relieve his mind. I laughed. He remained serious. "Now, I am going home!" he said. And he went away.

He left by the rear door again, made a wide detour around the policeman who was still standing there, turned up his coat collar and—keeping close to the houses—hurried home. Whenever some one looked at him, his head sank deeper into his coat and he hastened his steps. He walked up and down on the opposite side of the palace in Goethestrasse for a long time, before he could make up his mind to enter.

And then he went through the servants' entrance at the rear. He burst into the kitchen and asked the startled maid: "Any news?" Some one had been asking for him—a man, who said he would come back later—a man from the police. Klein sank into a chair. His heart stood still. "Anything else?" he asked, with difficulty. Nothing else. Blanka, Ignaz, Moritz, his sister—no one at home. As he was about to leave the kitchen, the girl said: "Selma is restless. Pesters me all day—I should get you; I should call you. Doesn't give me a minute's rest." Klein quickly went to his room. Before he opened the door to Selma's bedroom, he passed his open hands many times across his face. His lips moved. "Smile!" he said, half aloud, to himself. Then he went in to her.

Selma's face was turned to the wall. Klein thought she was asleep. Noiselessly, he seated himself in a chair by her bed. His features relaxed. Suddenly, he felt his hand gripped and was startled out of his musings. The girl looked him full in the face and asked, in her nasal voice: "Balogh went to the police?" Klein froze in his seat. His lips parted. He said with difficulty: "Who told you—?" She, in her nasal voice: "I hear everything! I was outside. I hear everything! He was shouting it on the stairs." Klein forced a smile and said, banteringly: "It is nothing, Selma, love! He shouts a lot!" She grated, in a nasal, matter-of-fact monotone: "If they put you in jail, I'll die!" He tried to laugh at her. The door bell rang. The laugh froze in his throat. Selma grated: "I died once before!" Klein laughed. Selma repeated: "I died once before!" The maid appeared in the door, and announced: "The gentleman from the police is here." Klein paled. He started to rise, but fell back into the chair. He pointed with his finger, made a helpless gesture toward the next room, and said dully: "Take him in there." Selma sat stiffly erect in her bed. Klein laughed shortly and groped for her hand. She said, in her grating voice: "He is waiting!"

Klein crossed the room laboriously. Now it can be told: it was on account of Selma that he had broken off his final attack on Abel, had abandoned his vengeance. For the sake of the sick child, he wished to avoid all danger. His lips moved. "No use! All for nothing!" he said. He passed his open hand many times across his face. "Smile!" he said, and: "Adonai! Adonai!" under his breath. Then, he opened the door and passed into the next room.

The man was a police inspector. He showed his credentials, and told Klein that he had come on a very painful errand. Klein nodded. He had come on account of Moritz, Herr Moritz Klein. Klein was silent. Moritz had been caught in the act of picking pockets at a street-car terminal. As his father was a prominent citizen, they had come to the conclusion that the son must be suffering from an ailment. From kleptomania. He could hardly be a common thief. There would be no scandal. Klein would no doubt place him in a sanitarium. If he would send a motor, they would release him in care of his father. Klein sat speechless. "Don't take it so to heart!" said the officer. When he received no answer, he bowed and left. Klein rose and went on wobbly legs to Selma's door, tore it open and leaned against the frame. "Selma!" he exclaimed, and laughed. "Selma!" he laughed. "Selma, love!" he laughed, and slapped his thigh. "Moritz is a pickpocket!" Out of his inflamed eyes, the tears rolled down his hollow cheeks.

In the meantime, I went, my pockets filled with documents, proofs and vouchers, to the criminal department of the customs-house; and when I found this closed, I went to the Public Prosecutor. To him I declared that Geza Balogh, agent, was strongly suspected by me of having embezzled customs-house duties entrusted to him and also of having smuggled great quantities of cocoa powder into the country. Balogh was arrested at his home.

After having made this report, I went on my way, whistling. It was a bright, clear evening, and I walked. As I was about to cross Westermannstrasse, a company of police suddenly came around the corner on the double-quick and closed the street. A police lieutenant, on a nervously prancing horse, commands: "Stop! Everybody!" And at the same moment, running, running, pressed hard by pursuing police in extended skirmish line, come fifty or sixty men, half-grown youths, collarless, wearing workingmen's caps, with ragged, empty sacks slung over their shoulders—running, howling, running. They throw stones that shatter windows, and running, running, are swallowed up in the black cavern of a narrow side-street, where the shouts and footsteps die out. The police disappear. A moment later, the street-car clatters by; impatient klaxons howl once more; pedestrians laugh, chatter and stop before shops, of which more than one still has hanging out of its maw the uncaught serpent, a queue of crouching, hungry wretches and nightfaces. . . .

BUT as soon as one puny revolt was crushed at this end of the street, it lifted its head at the other end or in another quarter of the city. It was guerilla warfare, a campaign of well-planned disturbances, laid out by the new council of the Party. A delegate from Moscow had been sent to take things in hand. "The Party in Vienna is neither fish nor flesh," said one of the letters—and more forceful action was demanded. "If the World Revolution had to wait for you, we could sleep for the next forty years," Lyobadkin wrote to Bloch. So the delegate was sent, a tall man with fishy eyes and ice-cold hands. He called himself Piotr Suvarov, and carried the passport of a certain Leib Meyersohn, of Lodz. He was supposed to be, in reality, none other than Ivan Illitch Vorovsky, of Jekaterinoslaw—the same Vorovsky who played the notorious part in the execution of the two hundred and fifty-eight Wrangel officers.

Vorovsky, or Suvarov, in a few months, succeeded, as he said, in thoroughly "curry-combing" the Party. "You have a lot of members who are no good," he declared. "They are mostly camp-followers." "You cannot exclude them without cause," Badele objected. "Then, we'll have to do as in P-6," said Fräulein Müllerova, who had come with Suvarov as his secretary; and Suvarov explained: "Two classes. One is the nucleus. Dynamite, if necessary. The others, the many—let them play at war, brother, if they wish!" The Revolutionary Party therefore had been divided. To the committee of the nucleus—Class D, for dynamite, Suvarov called it—belonged Suvarov, Müllerova and Badele, eight members from the other districts, an editor and two women. One of these women was called Adlerova, black-haired, ugly, hysterical, about forty years old, a former student of medicine; she had served under Bela Kun in Budapest, had been whipped and raped by a detachment of the "Awakened Hungarians," and hung by her feet, naked, for twelve hours in the cellar of the Honved Barracks before she escaped. Her frequent fits were a result of this torture. Her colleague, the second woman, whose admission to active service was almost unprecedented as she had been affiliated with the Party a very short time, was—Mirjam Feuerbach.

It had come about like this: On the day following that night when Mirjam had parted from her mother on the street-corner, on that day after the heart-breaking march of the masses in the gray of the morning, on that 15th of February, after a few hours of deep and dreamless sleep, she arose, went into the next room where her mother still tossed about in uneasy slumber, laid down a little roll of gaudily printed, filthily crumpled and hastily straightened-out paper slips that represented money, and left the house.

Thirty minutes later, she entered the secretarial office of the Communistic Party, stepped up to the window and said: "I wish to join the organization." A slow-moving man with a brush of gray hair looked sharply at her and asked: "What name shall I write in your Party-book?" And afterwards: "Nurse? You are out of work, sister? You are looking for work?" "Yes," said Mirjam; and after a pause, with an involuntary twitch of her sternly controlled lips: "Yes! Work! Any kind of work!" The man nodded slowly.

This happened on the 15th. On the 17th, she found a note at home—a boy had brought it. "Go at once to the municipal lodging-house, to the hospital-ward. Report to Dr. Hock and tell him you come for the diagnosis. He will talk to you in private. Identification: Party-book F 82." And on the evening of the 17th, Mirjam was working as nurse in the hospital-ward of the municipal lodging-house. Up to March 12th, she had talked with more than two hundred patients. Forty-three were willing to join the Party. Eight of these, after they were cured, disappeared and were never heard of; eleven left the ward feet foremost for operations, but the remaining twenty-four were enrolled. On March 13th, a newly arrived peasant youth complained to the chaplain of the institution about Mirjam's attempts at proselytizing. On the 14th, she was discharged. On the 15th, she cut and dyed her hair, received the identification papers of one Anna Bock, of Berlin, and—so her newly gained experience might be utilized—was delegated to the so-called "flop-house" group. These were trustworthy and persuasive members, whose task it was to have themselves locked up in the sleeping-wards of the lodging-houses as homeless, and there to recruit the lowest rank of the proletariat to the Revolutionary Party—a thankless job, by the way, for most of the frequenters were too wretched to care about politics and too dull for resentment. It was impossible to compete with the Salvation Army, who dished out a bowl of hot soup while they chanted their songs. But Mirjam worked. "You ought to take a little care of yourself, sister!" said the gray man in the secretarial office. "You don't get enough sleep. You are losing a great deal of weight!" "It doesn't matter!" said Mirjam, weak and happy. "It doesn't matter!" The gray man smiled, and said: "You are young, sister! You must keep your health!" Mirjam gave him her hand and said, almost vivaciously: "Now, everything is all right! I thank you!"

When she had left, the man took her card out of the big file of the organization and added it slowly and thoughtfully to the small, secret one of Class D. On April 22nd, Mirjam spoke for the first time at a meeting—three hundred extra women had been discharged from the brick-yards; they had to be won over. On May 4th, she was arrested, and on the 17th (as Anna Bock), she was released on her promise to desist. On the 25th was the first delegation meeting; on the 31st, the second. At the close of the latter occurred the little fracas with the police. They had—God knows why!—arrested a few prostitutes—miserable, wretched creatures. Mirjam tried to arouse the onlookers to free the women, and was herself taken into custody. She resisted and accidentally ran her fist into the face of one of the policemen, a blond, clumsily powerful peasant, who fell over. The next moment, she had glided behind the protecting wall of a rioting mob of night creatures. It was then that Piotr Suvarov had seen her and inquired: "Who is she? A member?" The gray man enlightened him. Suvarov said: "Her place is in the Council!" She was in the Council now, and had proven one of the most indefatigable workers.

It was at this time that Ignaz Klein once more became a nuisance. He was among those who, despite the most careful secrecy, had heard of the creation of Class D. And once more he felt himself neglected and ostracized, because he was not of the chosen. It was not difficult for him to learn all he wanted to know. This was on the 18th. On the 20th, in the evening, he waited before the house in which Suvarov, under the name of Silberstern, had rented a room. He walked up and down in front of this house until two o'clock in the morning before he saw Suvarov come along the deserted street, accompanied by a woman. Ignaz had once stood close to Suvarov during a meeting; Suvarov did not know him. Ignaz stepped up to the Russian, and said: "Brother Suvarov—?" The slender man was startled, and thrust his hand into his overcoat pocket; the woman—it was Müllerova—stepped behind Ignaz. Young Klein said: "Red Front!" Suvarov, who had collected himself, said tersely: "Your Party-book!" He took the young man up to his room—a very elaborately furnished room, by the way; Ignaz afterwards recalled having seen a huge brass bed, with a polar-bear skin lying in front of it.

Ignaz offered to carry out any order, even the most difficult, from the Party. Suvarov smiled. "Even with the revolver?" he asked. Ignaz flushed deeply and answered: "Even with the revolver!" The Russian squinted, and said: "We'll see! You'll be notified." It is more than likely that Suvarov at that time did not seriously think of taking advantage in any way of Ignaz's offer. He knew his kind at first glance—knew dozens like him. "Troublesome person!" he said later to Müllerova, when they were alone. "Rattle-brained. Disoriented bourgeois. Would like to be one of us. But can he? Too much imagination. Must be silenced.—Troublesome person!" he said, once more. Half asleep, she turned her head on the pillow and said gently: "Sometimes they will actually shoot, Ivan!" He had meant to inquire of Badele the next day about the young man. But the next morning, he had forgotten the incident.

He was at that time occupied with a matter of the utmost importance. There seemed to be no end of treachery. There was no step, no important decision made by the Party, that the police did not know of at the same time. And what was especially irksome to Suvarov—his personal arrangements, which had been successful in many ways and many places, here broke down completely. It happened during those days that a courier, arriving with money and important letters from the Ukraine, to be delivered at "The Shepherdess," was picked up as dead by the Red Hawks not two hundred yards away from the inn, bleeding from a horrible wound in the head. With great difficulty, they had kept the man alive, and he told them that a member of the Party had joined him on the street near the bridge—undoubtedly a member, for he had shown his Party-book, although rapidly, to be sure—that a clumsy, heavy-set man had stepped up to them from behind the grain elevator and asked for a light for his cigarette; and had, the next moment, hit him with a heavy object on the side of the head. "So it's not the police, but the shock troops!" said Badele. Suvarov asked: "How did the Nationalists know that a courier was expected?" Badele answered, thoughtfully: "This is the second time. A few months ago, they pursued a messenger." They found no solution. Suvarov commissioned Gutjahr, who was selling him information from the camp of the shock troops—he must have been using his business connection with Reinhard Birkmeier for this purpose, among others—to investigate; but even he (and Suvarov had a high opinion of his ability to scent out what he was after) returned in a few days without results. "They weren't from the shock troops. The whole thing must have been an accident. Two highwaymen, who happened to catch him on the road," he declared. Suvarov looked sharply at him. "Thank you!" he said, abruptly; and, later, he said to Badele: "Watch this Gutjahr closely. He is suspicious!"

ON MARCH 29th, three days after my coup with the forged letters, at seven o'clock in the morning—I was still in bed—the door of my room opened and Balogh entered. He was unshaven, unkempt, hollow-eyed from loss of sleep. "How did you get in here?" I asked, and looked around for the bell. "Never mind!" he said. "The door was open. I am out on bail." I asked: "Who put up the bond?" He was still standing near the door. He said: "None of your business! I didn't come here to make conversation. I came here to tell you that you are the biggest crook that lives, if you put a Balogh who has a wife and eight children in the soup. I ask if you will go at once to the Public Prosecutor and withdraw your complaint!" I said: "You were going to put us and Klein in the soup!" He shouted: "My children must eat!" I said: "I might consider giving you a present, but if you shout, I'll throw you down the stairs!" He screeched: "I don't need your present! I ask if you will go at once to the Public Prosecutor!" He could be heard outside. I roared: "You crook! You embezzled the customs-house duties!" He grew still paler, and said, quietly: "Very well! Now, everybody will croak!" I roared: "Get out!" He left.

It started that same day on the Exchange. It came to light later that Balogh, after his break with Klein, had soon decided not to denounce him to the authorities; instead, he went to De Letter and told him everything. And De Letter thought he had at last found an opportunity to hit back at the Abel Works for my trick with the canned meats. He had plenty of cash at the time. Within two days, he had secretly formed a syndicate for the sole purpose of smashing the Abel Works, and incidentally, Samuel Klein also. Aside from his desire for revenge—he was too calculating a man to act on this motive alone—he was out to gain a foothold in the chocolate industry in Central Europe: in case of a smash, it should be possible to get control of the Abel factories. After the syndicate had already been formed, he found another ally: Ducrède. The motives of the Frenchman were of a different nature. He hoped, by this roundabout method, to get a weapon against Birkmeier into his hand—why, will be told later. The gentlemen were ready; before they commenced, they wanted some information from Balogh, but the little man had disappeared. De Letter went to his home and heard about his arrest, then went to the Public Prosecutor and succeeded in getting him out on bail. The syndicate put up the bond.

It started on the floor of the Exchange, as I said, the day after Balogh's release. It wasn't much: a little scandal, a little annoyance—I paid hardly any attention to it, especially since I could not possibly know of De Letter's plans. Fenichel, the old agent, came over to me, while ten or fifteen others, accidentally or otherwise, lounged in the neighborhood. He licked his lips, and declared: "You still owe me some brokerage, from the Alpine deal of last week!" I said: "Come to my office to-morrow morning, or send me a bill." His voice grew louder: "I was at your office yesterday! They told me you were out!" I said: "You're a fool! Don't be ridiculous! Come this afternoon. Don't act like an idiot!" He shouted: "I want my brokerage! The Abel firm doesn't pay its debts!" He pulled a bill out of his pocket and waved it before my face. "Here!" he shouted. Then, he turned to the fast gathering crowd of brokers, and said confidentially: "Can't get your money from them!" I grabbed the quite insignificant bill from his hand, pulled out my wallet and gave him some paper-money, saying: "There! Keep the change for car-fare. And if you ever show your face at the office again, you'll be thrown out!" I turned away. Fenichel shouted something after me. I pushed through the gaping crowd and went to the buffet, where I found Klein. I told him of the incident. He was far from calm about it. "Fenichel wouldn't dare, if he weren't sure of support," he said. Klein was freshly shaven and wore a new suit. The grooming made his pale face paler, his blood-shot eyes more conspicuous. He bolted down two or three sandwiches. "Hungry!" he said.

Then Bostensohn, tall, skinny and red-nosed, came to us. He was known to have accumulated a substantial fortune by dealing exclusively with people close to ruin. He lent them money against personal security, against the jewels of their wives, the dowry-insurance of their daughters. He bought what they wanted to sell, paying half of what it was worth. Merely to be seen talking to him was enough to ruin one's credit. He came over to us, the alert vulture-nose drawn down over his broadly grinning mouth. He tapped Klein, who was munching a sandwich, on the shoulder, and said: "You should live! Ham with butter! I can't afford that! I eat Liptauer." And suddenly, turning to me: "Why don't we do business together?" Klein caught him up. He said: "Business? You with us? A miracle! You need money?" Bostensohn was taken aback to such an extent that he laughed for about thirty seconds to collect his wits. Then he winked one eye, humorously but on the alert, and said, "Yes! I need money!" And, after a pause, looking from one to the other: "Let us say four billion!" I tried to get us out of the affair, and hastened to say: "Against security, naturally. What have you?" He gestured broadly, and said: "I have what you want." He thought it over and then pulled a long consignment out of his pocket. "There!" he said. "Textiles! Czechoslovakian cloth! I bought it on the sly. A bargain!" Klein made a grab for the consignment—and suddenly gripped the buffet for support. I looked over his shoulder. It was a list of the same goods that we had bought on credit three days ago for four billion and had sold, the same hour, for two and a half billion because we needed the cash. "Worth seven billion!" Bostensohn declared. Klein had regained his composure. "You gonof!" he said. "Two and a half billion! You can have on it, weekly notice, at the usual rate." "Done!" said Bostensohn. He left us rather hastily and with less confidence. "You gave him a nasty lesson," I laughed. Klein said:

"And we lend money on the goods that—" He broke off. "There is something in the air!" he said, nervously. "There is something we don't know!" When we came out of the building, five or six persons stood at the entrance with the latest edition of the Farkas's paper. When we approached, they scattered. I bought one from the first vendor. On the top of the second page, I found this:

> ### AN INSOLVENCY?
>
> On the floor of the Stock Exchange to-day, the rumor grew apace that an industrial and wholesale produce firm and banking house of our city, founded during the World War, finds itself in difficulties. It is said that this firm bought a hundred and fifty carloads of smuggled cocoa and will now be forced to pay back-duty on it. Aside from the criminal prosecution of the guilty parties, the penalty demanded by the Government is fifty times the original customs duty, and the total amounts involved are therefore of colossal proportions. Up to the present hour we have been unable, however, to verify this rumor.

"There!" said Klein. We did not exchange another word.

The happenings of the next afternoon I have marked down in rotation on the scratch-pad of my desk:—

At two o'clock came Schornstein, a friendly old gentleman, a small banker—perhaps the only one of his kind left—who for years had held strictly to safe and unspeculative investments, lending out the small savings of the thrifty poor of his suburban district, in substantial amounts, at a moderate profit, to the brokerage houses of secure repute. These were usually houses of old standing—but Schornstein had met Abel, had been fired by Abel's energy, had formed illusions as to Abel's breadth of vision, and had for once made an exception to his iron-clad rule. Since then, he had been involved continuously in Abel's enterprises, to exceptionally large amounts, for he had the confidence of the thrifty poor so completely that their small savings filled his treasury to overflowing. At two o'clock, this Herr Schornstein, red cheeked and white haired, came to us. He spoke of the weather, rubbed his hands, peered questioningly into every corner of the room, and then he took his leave. At the door, he said: "Any new business? Oh, yes! We haven't settled up yet!" He looked at the floor, and said: "Well, I suppose that will soon be done!" He grew very embarrassed, and left without daring to press the matter further.

It was different with Belf, who came at two-thirty. He said: "Am I going to lose my money with you?" Klein was suddenly very hilarious and slapped him on the thigh. Both laughed loudly, strenuously. At two forty-five, I wired an order to sell the fifty-seven houses in Berlin, Hannover and Nürnberg for cash, at the best possible prices. When I tried to talk to Abel about it, he could not be found. His servant told me over the telephone that he had been out all night, and had not yet returned. A nervous shiver ran over Klein. "Everything is falling to pieces, and Abel doesn't show up!" he said. At three-ten, Schornstein's secretary telephoned and asked to know if we were prepared to repay the loan to his bank—or half of it. "To-morrow!" I said. At three twenty-five, a gentleman came and asked to see one of the heads. He was a solicitor for Schmalz, the adjuster. If we were looking for a settlement with our creditors—Klein roared at him and I threw him out. At five minutes to four, Bostensohn came, brought the bill of lading, and collected his two and a half billion.

This was fortunate, for at four-fifteen came a lawyer, one Dr. von Hechler, a blond man with saber scars on his cheeks, and introduced himself as the legal representative of the textile merchant of whom Klein had bought the cloth. It had come to the knowledge of his client that the merchandise had been sold within the hour of the first sale for a pittance—for half its value, to be exact. Taking into consideration certain newspaper reports, this seemed to smack of misappropriation. "Sledding," it was called. This gave him the right to demand immediate payment. Otherwise, he would at once confer with the Public Prosecutor. He had been informed—Klein interrupted him. "You have been listening to a lot of talk!" he snapped. The blond man jumped up and cried: "I resent the inference!" Klein reached into a drawer and slapped on the desk the bill of lading that Bostensohn had left with us a few minutes before. He shouted: "You talk of misappropriation? You? Who sold? Who is 'sledding'?" The lawyer, taken aback, said placatingly: "My informants—" Klein screamed: "Your informants can go to the devil!" The blond man left in a flurry. Klein snickered hysterically. "This is the end!" he said, and grew very pale.

At four-fifty, the Lloyd's Bank telephoned. Only a few days before, we had deposited with them all the Abel shares in our possession; not only the secret and legally prohibited shares of the Abel Works, but also those belonging to Abel personally, to Klein, to Birkmeier, myself and to fifteen or twenty different stockholders—altogether, about eight million shares. This was nearly half of the entire issue. The Lloyd's Bank telephoned that Abel shares were being offered privately from office to office. They had been quoted at noon, when the Exchange closed, at 2150. Now, they could be had at 1800. Our collateral was therefore not worth fourteen and a half billion, at present. And our loan was twelve billion, not counting the interest. Not sufficient security. We should send additional collateral, or repay. Klein said: "To-morrow will be time enough!" The man at the other end of the line shouted: "No! Read your agreement! Sufficient collateral to cover, or repayment! Or we'll be forced to sell!" Klein said: "At the moment, we have no more shares at our disposal. But we have merchandise worth seven billion. I'll send a messenger with the bill of lading." They were satisfied. "On with the dance!" I said. And at five-thirty, the doorman brought us the late edition of *Truth.*

This issue, with glaring headlines, printed across three columns, contained a two and a half page attack, a vicious attack, against Abel, Klein and the Abel Works. Farkas had turned. Farkas was attacking us from the rear. If Farkas dared do this, he either considered us as good as dead, or he was convinced that he himself was able to give us the coup de grâce. Which meant that Farkas had been bought by some one else. By whom? We still did not know about the new De Letter syndicate, but the way in which—among all these broad, gloating, clumsily elaborated revelations—the deal of the spoiled canned meats was avoided, should have given us an inkling of the truth. Whatever else Farkas disclosed was covered by facts. In addition to this, he published an unverified statement that the young aristocrat on whom the rotten cigarettes had been unloaded had just then committed suicide. And as Farkas had grown tired of vainly wooing the political party of the Left Wing and was at present trying to connect with the Nationalists, he not only deplored this tragedy, but went into oily and lachrymose lamentations over the disgraceful manner in which the old nobles were being defrauded. Klein chuckled hysterically. "I am going home, now!" he said, wearily.

But he did not have a chance. The Lloyd's Bank telephoned. "Have you read the paper?" shouted the man at the other end of the wire. "Abel shares are falling! They are being offered at 1500! If this keeps on, within six hours your collateral won't be worth anything!" He choked: "We'll sell! We are forced to sell! I am only an employee! This will cost me my job!" Klein said, calmly: "Don't talk nonsense! If you should throw as much as two hundred and fifty thousand shares on the market, the other seven and three-quarter million will be waste-paper! We'll support the price. To-morrow! At the Exchange!" The other wailed: "To-morrow! To-morrow, there'll be nothing to support, if it keeps on like this!" Klein rang off and gave orders to three agents to buy ten thousand Abel shares each. An hour later, the price was once more 1800-1830. "I am going home, now!" said Klein, and rose heavily.

No, he did not go home. The door flew open and Birkmeier, his face mottled, entered. "Abel here?" he asked, without greeting us. Then, he flung a crumpled copy of *Truth* on the desk, and shouted: "There!" Klein shrugged his shoulders and turned aside. Birkmeier turned the gaze of his protruding eyes from me to Klein and from Klein back to me. He shouted: "So all that the paper says is true!"

Birkmeier had ample cause to be ill-humored. About two weeks before, a note had been presented to him for payment by a Herr Benbassad, an Oriental, whose face was faintly familiar. The note carried, beneath Reinhard's signature, his, Birkmeier's, endorsement. The amount was not large, but he did not remember ever having granted his son this favor. He examined it closer—no doubt: his signature had been forged. Herr Benbassad shuffled his feet and asked fretfully when he would get his money. As the son had not paid, he naturally looked to the co-signer. Birkmeier, in silent rage, paid and went to Reinhard. His son, with uneasy eyes, smiled sheepishly and stroked his thick, blond, slightly curly hair, which grew in front of his ears down to his jaw-bone, giving him the aspect of inherited solidity. Business had been poor, he said. But he would promise on his word of honor that—the discourse was brought to a sudden end by a particularly forceful and resounding box on the ear. Unfortunately, the business itself was not settled so promptly. During the next two weeks, no fewer than fourteen notes of the same kind were presented to Birkmeier—notes calling for substantial amounts. Birkmeier refused to pay and declared his signature had been forged. He also declared that he would have the police investigate the antecedents of this Herr Benbassad, who, judging by his behavior, was not a real Armenian, but a Jew. Benbassad left hastily, but a half hour later came M. Ducrède, lately a member of the Interallied Control Commission. He came as a friend, he said; financially, he was not interested in this business—a lie, by the way; he was a silent partner of the Armenian on a fifty-fifty basis. He thought it a friendly duty, he said, to point out to Birkmeier the unwisdom of refusing payment on these notes. Not only was the forgery itself criminal; it had been committed for a criminal purpose. The young man had paid for opium and cocaine with these notes—this could not be called the act of a foolish boy, and certainly was not consistent with Reinhard's Nationalistic affiliations. Here, he paused. Birkmeier grew pale and roared: "Arrest him! Arrest him at once!"—and he did not pay. Incidentally, it goes without saying that it was not possible for Ducrède or Benbassad to evoke the law in this delicate business; that was the reason for Ducrède's connection with the De Letter syndicate for smashing the Abel Works. The Frenchman hoped in this way—as the man with the upper hand—to be able at the right moment to force Birkmeier, as a member of a collapsed enterprise, to pay these notes, after all.

As for Reinhard: one morning, he disappeared. And then came the auditor of the "Baldur" shock troop and demanded payment of a sum which had been contributed by Nationalistic sympathizers and which had evaporated in Reinhard's hands. In this case, Birkmeier softened and paid. And as he was pointedly snubbed by his wife, that quiet and sublimely foolish and nearly deaf old woman, and by Helga, and the Count, his son-in-law, one can realize with what eagerness the full-beard looked forward—on the strength of the revelations in *Truth*—to giving vent to his accumulated wrath.

"So it is true!" he shouted. Klein said: "Don't play the innocent! You knew, and you took yours!" Birkmeier did not vouchsafe him an answer. "Jew nerve!" he said, through his teeth. Klein said: "If we go to jail, you'll go with us!" Birkmeier made an indecent gesture toward him, exhaled noisily and commenced walking up and down the room, with vigorous strides. Klein scrutinized him from head to toe, and said to me in an undertone: "That ought to be preserved in alcohol!" But Birkmeier had sharp ears. He screeched, in a falsetto voice: "Keep your mouth shut, you dirty kike!" Klein paled. His foe turned away from him and said to me: "I am going to Abel! I'll know where to find him. I protest! I demand satisfaction! Satisfaction!" he said once more, sternly, and slammed the door behind him. Klein, silenced, leaned against the desk. "I am going home, now!" he said, wearily. I also reached for my hat. On the stairs, we met a collector for Vogel, Junior. "Where are you going?" asked Klein. "To the Abel Works—collections." "There's no one there," said Klein, and when the man hesitated: "We were also looking for them!"

But downstairs, we were caught by a process-server. He had a summons for Klein, Abel and myself, to appear the next afternoon at two o'clock, at the Public Prosecutor's office—as defendants. Under the heading "Subject of examination" some one had carelessly scribbled: "Fraud."

Klein's lips quivered. "I am going home, now!" he said.

THE HOUSE OF CARDS

AFTER Birkmeier had stormed out of my office, he ran, gesticulating, the five or six blocks to Abel's apartment. Panting, he was about to mount the stairs, when he was met by Abel's servant. At home? No, Herr Abel had not come home. He would not be in this evening either, and that probably meant all night; he had telephoned and told the servant to take the night off and come back in the morning. Birkmeier raved. The other shrugged his shoulders and went on out. Finally, the full-beard also took his leave, but only after he had glared threateningly at the closed door and had said aloud, sternly, although he was alone: "To-morrow morning! I'll be back!"

This happened at about six o'clock in the evening. Nobody knows where Abel really was at this time—where the president of the Abel Works prowled about, while the process-server looked for him with a summons, while Klein sat at the bedside of his daughter, while I paced to and fro in my room, while the rats scurried all over the sinking ship and the clouds of a final thunderstorm gathered. Seven hours later, at one o'clock in the morning, he was pulling himself together. Brass was already drunk and little Schweinburg had vomited; Gutjahr was arguing with the host, who said he wanted to close up because only yesterday there had been a raid in the street; Ruben kept laughing and repeating: "Rats, cats, cats, rats!" and laughing again, his face ashen pale, his eyes ringed with black, his forehead almost touching the filthy wet marble of the table top; while Wurmbrand and the other seven nodded solemnly, and Anton gurgled a few indistinguishable words through the noxious fumes. Then Abel, president of the Abel Works, groped for his tie, threw money on the table, put on his hat and said: "Home!" Wurmbrand began to weep and wanted to embrace Ruben; three of the seven were startled out of their dreams and chattered excitedly; Brass, lying on the floor beside the table, tried to seize Abel's left leg; green-haired Mizzi, who called herself Madelon at the time, started to get down from her chair behind the bar, with little shrieks of protest—but the glass door had clicked shut behind Abel and Ruben. The welcome night air, harsh and sobering, enveloped the staggering two, cleansing face and brain, enabling them to collect themselves somewhat at the opposite street corner. No doubt by now they realized that Gutjahr and Anton had joined them. To right and left, the walls of startled houses echoed the sound of their footsteps as the four reeled toward Abel's apartment—without a word, except that now and then Ruben murmured "Rats!" or "Cats!" laughing softly.

Abel unlocked the outer door, and they groped their way up the dark stairs. "I seem to have forgotten my flashlight!" Gutjahr muttered; and when the door was opened: "Is nobody home?" In the vestibule, Abel turned on the light—faint and eery, it lay on the tapestried wall, amid clothes-racks and old, faded, heavy-framed oil paintings, and fell to the right and to the left into the black emptiness of the many open doors. Anton peered into one of these. Turning, he said: "The bath-room!" and grinned without cause. Gutjahr poked him in the ribs to silence him.

An argument had started between Abel and Ruben—or rather, in very few words, Abel was requesting and Ruben refusing, Abel pleading and Ruben refusing. Abel was trying to get Ruben into the salon and onto the couch, where he could go to sleep. The boy resisted stubbornly, and staggered into the spacious, dark dining-room, where, a moment later, the light flared up. For a moment, Abel stood, undecided and exhausted, in the vestibule, his gaze wandering unseeingly from Anton to Gutjahr—who were standing, silent witnesses, in the bath-room doorway—over to Ruben, who was sitting stiffly erect at the dining-room table. Abel passed the back of his hand across his brow and, with slow, hesitant steps, went into the dining-room, closing the door behind him.

Gutjahr listened, with an evil smile. Then, he silently took Anton's hand and led him, without turning on the lights, through the bath-room into the adjoining room—probably the music-room, for, as they groped about in the darkness, they ran against a startled piano. From there they came to what smelled like a bed-room. On a bureau, some glassware tinkled thinly. Farther to the right lay the huge salon, a deep, heavily carpeted room, thickly clustered with spindly-legged furniture. It was dimly lighted at the far end—the door leading to the dining-room was half open.

The two men had crossed the room by different routes—Gutjahr, cautiously alert; Anton, in enigmatic hilarity, snickering to himself every time he ran against furniture or wall. Now, Gutjahr put a hand on his arm and pulled him a few steps to one side. There the two stood silent in the dark, and stared into the dining-room through the lighted opening of the door.

At the huge table with its green velvet cover, beneath a rain of crazily reflected light-rays from the chandelier, Abel and Ruben sat opposite each other—Ruben, still stiffly erect, staring into space, and Abel, bent far forward, his arms before him on the heavy table, gazing with terrified eyes into the frozen face of the boy.

There was the face of Ruben, yet the face of a stranger, the breath of a stranger, the eyes glazed by the will of a stranger. Gutjahr, in the darkness of the next room, clenched his fingers on his partner's arm in wild triumph as the masked features moved and the bloodless lips said: "Father! Make me your heir, dear Father! Make me your heir, dear Father!" And there was such horrible callousness in the monotonously chanted words, such alien strangeness—so different these words from any the boy had ever thought or spoken—that Abel flinched, as though under invisible whip lashes. In the other room, Anton whispered to Gutjahr: "He is asking for money!" And Gutjahr whispered back to Anton: "There is a lot of money here! In the safe!" Anton then whispered back to Gutjahr: "The key isn't in his overcoat in the hall." And Gutjahr whispered back to Anton: "Then, he has it in his vest pocket!" Anton whispered to Gutjahr: "If that's so, we're cooked! Let's take some of this silver and his fur coat, and skip!" Gutjahr whispered: "Could we take the key away from him?" "He'll yell!" Anton objected. Gutjahr grunted: "He mustn't yell!" Anton guffawed noiselessly, as though the other had told a joke. And Gutjahr, startled at first, immediately adapted himself to Anton's mood and forced an evil chuckle. Cautiously, they sat down on damask-covered chairs and exhausted their senseless levity, staring, lynx-eyed, the while through the lighted door.

Ruben and Abel still sat face to face. Ruben's thoughts had seemingly veered away from his insistent request, almost without apparent transition, and Abel was eagerly answering his questions, as though trying to take him still further from the other subject. The strange boy had suddenly commenced to talk about fashions in men's clothes: when it was and when it was not permissible to wear a white tie with a dress suit. The old man agreed with him, argued with him, elaborating at great length; and only his tense gaze betrayed his bewilderment at the sudden turning of the conversation into this innocuous channel. A tenseness of strained nerves.

"Standing collar," said the old man, "and not too high." A tenseness that heard with startling clarity when suddenly in the next room an agate ash-tray rang lightly against the glass top of a table. A tenseness that was shaken by the sound, yet would not permit the distraction of an investigation.

The ash-tray had been jarred by Gutjahr and Anton colliding with each other in the darkness, as they returned from an intensive still-hunt on which they had gone, each for himself and not knowing of the other's purpose, stalking through dark rooms across velvety carpets, here and there eagerly fingering the surface of luxurious, antique furniture. Now, back in the salon, they saw once more the picture through the open door. "They are talking," said Anton to Gutjahr. And Gutjahr answered: "The safe is in the wall, at the right of the bed." Anton said: "We'll have to move the night-stand." Gutjahr chuckled softly. "So you also were snooping, and I didn't see you!" he said. Anton did not answer. "He carries the key in his vest pocket," said Gutjahr. The other was silent. "Could we take the key away from him?" asked Gutjahr; and when he received no answer, he continued slowly, as if talking to himself: "He mustn't yell!" There was silence. "He mustn't yell!" said Gutjahr once more, and groped lightly for Anton's arm. Anton pushed his hand away, muttering: "No!" Gutjahr said softly: "He won't yell!" "No!" said Anton, more loudly. "Be quiet!" Gutjahr admonished, sharply. After that, they were silent.

In the other room, while Abel was still talking about men's fashions, Ruben interrupted him unexpectedly, and said, with pale lips: "Make me your heir, dear Father!" Abel started, and was silenced. "Dear Father, make me your heir!" said Ruben. Abel quavered: "In summer, one can also wear a black tie at funerals." Ruben said: "Make me your heir, dear Father!" A tense silence followed, in which the mutter of the whispering voices in the next room could be heard.

"Do you think the old man hangs around him just because, twenty years ago, he threw the Feuerbach woman across his bed?" asked Gutjahr, in the darkness. And, when he received no answer: "Why does he drag the boy to his apartment every night, when the little one is drunk and snowed up and doesn't know what he is doing?" "Shut up!" said Anton. "I'm not an idiot! You can't make a fool of me!" And after a pause, as if he had given the matter serious thought, in a very low voice: "Shut up!" Then came the other's insistent whisper: "Because he doesn't know what he is doing then! Because then he crawls into the old swine's bed!" "No!" said Anton. With an evil laugh, Gutjahr taunted: "He wouldn't for you! He is a saint, as far as you are concerned! You can sleep with your lousy punks!" And, after a pause: "Did you ever see him naked?" "Shut up!" growled Anton, threateningly, and tore the other's hand from his shoulder. And then they were silent.

In the other room, in the light, Ruben said: "Make me your heir, dear Father!" And Abel answered: "Later, perhaps. Later, perhaps. Perhaps later, when you are well again." "Make me your heir, dear Father!" chanted Ruben, as he smiled into space. "Later, perhaps," said Abel, "if my boy will listen to me . . . if my boy will go away with me . . ." "Your heir . . ." said Ruben. "Later . . ." said Abel. His gaze did not leave the boy's eyes. His lips trembled and he said again and again: "Perhaps later . . . when my boy doesn't go around with these persons any more . . . when my boy goes away with me . . ." His white head shimmered, old and very lonely, in the crazily glittering light.

"There!" said Gutjahr in the next room, and pointed through the door. "Did you hear that? He wants to carry him off!" And when he received no answer to this, a shocking change came over him. He changed in looks, expression and gesture. And twisting his hips, as though the heavy man could see him in the darkness, pursing his lips in artificial childishness, he pouted: "You haven't got him, and you won't get me, either!" He whined like a spoiled child, and caressed his companion. Anton breathed heavily, but he did not answer. "You shan't have me—shan't have me!" whined Gutjahr, simulating a tremble of agitation in his whispering voice. "He mustn't yell!" he exclaimed suddenly, as if talking to himself. Anton released himself abruptly and remained silent. Gutjahr pouted: "When I need his suit so badly! When the old man wears a suit that fits me so perfectly! When I want his dress suit so—so badly!" And when Anton remained silent, he said, almost inaudibly: "You never refused before!" Somewhere, in a far corner, Anton said thickly: "That was different! You know that! They were different! That wasn't for money!" Gutjahr pouted: "Bibi is mad . . . Bibi wants the suit!" There was silence.

Silence. In the other room, Ruben said, in a very high-pitched voice: "Yes, Father!" Abel said: "Will you stay away from all of them—all of them?" Ruben answered: "Yes, Father, yes!" And Abel said: "Stay with me?" "Yes!" said Ruben. Once more, many times more, Abel wanted to hear this, and repeated his question. "Yes, Father, yes!" said Ruben again and again, in the high-pitched voice that was not his own. "Yes, Father!" and: "Make me your heir!" and: "Yes, Father, yes!" said Ruben. And Abel's voice trembled with happiness when he asked: "Always? Always?" "Yes," said Ruben, "yes!"

"Yes," said Anton, "yes! But I don't want to see his face!" "You will not see his face," said Gutjahr. Anton said: "Ruben mustn't be there!" "Ruben won't be there!" said Gutjahr. Anton asked: "We'll call him away?" "We'll call him away," said Gutjahr, with forced calmness, for he was almost raging with impatience at the lout's hesitancy. Anton asked: "But if Ruben refuses to come away?" "He'll come away!" said Gutjahr, with forced calmness. And Anton: "A crack over the head to daze the old man—that's enough!" "Yes," said Gutjahr, "yes! To daze the old man!" He ground his teeth in suppressed rage. Anton said: "But Ruben mustn't see it!" Gutjahr lost his self-control. "You won't do it, you bitch!" he said. Anton was silent.

"Yes," said Ruben, in the other room, "yes, yes!" And Abel had suddenly become verbose, and laughed and talked. "We'll travel!" he said. "Don't say anything to anybody. Tell them you'll see them to-morrow. Then, come back here. We'll have our trunks packed and waiting here. Down with them to the automobile . . . to the station! We'll take a sleeping compartment, and away we'll go; and then, in the morning—the blue sky, the ocean!" "Yes!" said Ruben. And Abel: "And then, we'll find some quiet place that no one knows of, that no one in this city ever heard of. We'll disappear. I'll take along lots of money. We two will disappear for six months, for a year. My boy will forget everything. City, dives—everything! Then, we'll return, tanned by the sun. Or perhaps you won't want to come back again. Very well, we'll stay away another year! Or years! Always! Always together!" "Yes!" said Ruben. Abel laughed happily. His white head shimmered, old and very lonely, in the crazily glittering light. "To Positano," he said. "Taormina! There is a ferry between Messina and Reggio—you'll be surprised: they put entire trains on a boat!" Suddenly, he was lost in thought. "On a boat!" he repeated, absent-mindedly, and was silent. "Yes," said Ruben, "yes, yes!"

In the salon, Anton said to Gutjahr: "If you call him away, the old man will know that something is up, and there'll be a scene!" "Leave it to me!" said Gutjahr. "I'll go to the right around the table to Ruben. You go to the left." Anton said: “Then, the old man will come toward me. I don’t want to see his face!” “No!” said Gutjahr. “If I go to Ruben, he’ll also go to Ruben. He’ll turn to the left, away from you. You’ll be behind him.” “Then, you must whistle a tune,” said Anton; and in a whisper: “I don’t want to see his face!” Gutjahr whispered: “You won’t do it, you bitch!” Without a sound, Anton sprang at his throat. Gutjahr bent back his fingers. “Bitch!” he said, when he regained his breath. The two stood motionless, face to face; they were clutching at each other and panting. Then, suddenly, something burst in Anton. For a moment, it seemed as though he would scream. He lifted his hand to his mouth and buried his teeth in the palm. He stood half turned away. And when Gutjahr grasped him by the shoulders and pushed him forward, the chattering of his teeth bit into his whisper. “Not—his face!” he said. By this time, they stood in the doorway.

“Syracuse!” said Abel. “And from there, on the train to Girgenti!” His white head shimmered. Only when Ruben suddenly stared at the door did he realize that something alien had entered the room. He turned, saw, and started. “You are still here!” he murmured. “I thought you had gone!” He forced a laugh, and it seemed as though he tried to shake off a sudden fear that had come over him—he knew not of what. “So you are still here!” he said. The two, side by side, had advanced some three or four very short, very stiff steps toward the table. Abel leaned back in his chair; his eyes were watchful. “Over there is liqueur,” he said, and laughed loudly into the silence. The two parted. Gutjahr commenced to whistle a marching song with a brisk, joyous rhythm and walked slowly to the right around the table toward Ruben. The march tempo also took possession of Anton. But his legs seemed heavy, and so there was only a gay swinging of his arms while his steps remained short and hesitant. Consequently, he was still five or six strides away from Abel when Gutjahr had already placed his arm around Ruben’s shoulder and, whistling, whistling the joyous marching song, was pulling the motionless boy out of his chair. He resisted slightly—it appeared rather like a playful scuffle. Abel rose. Somewhere deep within him, something quivered; somewhere within him, something pleaded for gayety and ease. He went three or four little steps around the table toward Ruben and Gutjahr, and something within him tried to laugh, but laughed a little too shrilly—and shattered itself at once against his fear. He stopped. His white head shimmered, old and very lonely, in the crazily glittering light. Still whistling, Gutjahr forced Ruben with playful violence toward the door of the salon. Abel, silenced, raised his left hand after the boy, as though seeking to prevent his departure. His lips formed a word that poised unspoken: "Ruben!"

But then, he sensed something behind him, and he turned. Anton had followed him, to the left, with small steps around the table, and now suddenly the two men stood face to face. The eyes of the lumpish man, bulging slightly, were bloodshot and stared fixedly—avoiding the gaze of the old man—at a button on his vest. He stood slightly bent forward. In his right hand, he held a heavy silver candelabrum, jerked from a console in passing. The left hand, empty, a broad, red paw, hung slack at his side. Abel gasped: "What—do you—want?" But now Gutjahr had reached the door with Ruben and, whistling shrilly, pushed him into the darkness of the next room. He slammed the door and tried to lock it, but the key broke. So, with legs apart, he pressed himself against the wood and shouted: "Now!"

This was the moment when Anton struck. He swung the silver object against the old white head. But as Abel jerked back, the result was only a gaping cut across brow, nose and mouth. "No!" said Abel, softly. And Anton perhaps would not have struck again, had not Ruben at this moment come to himself in the next room. He howled and threw himself heavily against the door, but he was powerless against Gutjahr, whose weight easily kept the door closed and who —to drown the frenzied howling—shouted madly . . . shouted the joyous measures of the blatant marching song.

THIS was at ten minutes past three. Seven hours later, shortly before half-past-ten in the morning, after Klein and I had stepped out of the motor and entered the club-room from the rear entrance of the Exchange, Huth said: "Good that I see you! You can't support the Abel shares like this. This morning, the price was 1780. The thirty thousand shares I bought for you forced them up to 1930 before opening. But now, you can buy enough at 1820 to paper a room!" I said: "We must absolutely keep the price at 2000. If possible, a little above 2000." "Forget it!" said Huth. "All selling orders are in at 2000. Stick your nose in there. The whole Exchange has Abels to sell at 2000." "Who is behind this? Who is selling?" I asked. Huth said: "No one seems to know. A strong hand—there's no doubt about it. You might be able to boost the price to 1950. But above that, they'll swamp you." Behind Huth, at the entrance to the floor, I saw the representative of the Lloyd's Bank. He was looking over at us, impatiently shifting his weight from one foot to the other. "We'll support the market!" I said to Huth. "When the price goes below 1800, buy!" He asked: "How many?" I: "Up to a hundred thousand shares." And he, over his shoulder, with a nonchalance I did not like: "You realize, of course, that to-day is settlement? What is not cleared to-day, you will have to accept and pay for." I measured him coldly, and said: "Thanks for the reminder!" He shrugged his shoulders, turned and dived into the hall, where the first noisy confusion had commenced. Klein, who had been quiet until now, said: "He is right! We buy—what are we going to pay with?" We were about to follow Huth, but at the entrance, the man from the Lloyd's Bank, the loud-mouth with spectacles, caught us. He shot over to us and crowed: "Abels are falling! You've got to keep the price up! Your deposit—" Klein snarled at him: "Shout a little louder, and the deposit won't be worth a damn!" The man shut up and grew so pale that his innumerable pimples stood out sharply. He said no more and crossed to the telephone booths. "He'll keep his trap shut!" I said. Klein laughed drily: "A fine judge of human nature, you are! Now, he shuts up—yes! But if we can't keep up the price, then you'll hear what a voice he has!" I asked: "What are we going to do?" Klein gazed past me. "Buy!" he said, softly. We had entered the floor and swam with the crowd past the counters of the sworn brokers. "Buy!" repeated Klein, and I asked, so that only he could hear: "What with?" We stepped into a somewhat quiet corner near the State Railroads stand. "What are we going to pay with?" I asked again. Much had changed over night. Many of our ships had sunk. The telegrams to our branches and factories had brought no money—they were all tied up and overexpanded. Klein also—he had telegraphed to the four corners of the earth—had come with empty hands. "The value is still there," I said, trying to calm him. He ground his teeth: "What good does it do us?" "What are we going to pay with?" I asked, once more. Klein looked around and put his lips close to my ear. "Listen!" he said. "The market is bullish in State Railroads. We can borrow Railroad shares against loan money." I didn't understand him. He continued: "Offer twenty thousand kronen a week per share for the loan of them. Take what you can get—five thousand, ten thousand. These borrowed shares, we sell. Then, we can buy Abel shares. Then, we can pay Abel shares, and keep up the price!" I said: "Sell Railroads? That's madness!" He shrugged his shoulders. "To buy Abels is also madness!" he said, brusquely. I said: "Perhaps I can buy Railroads against future payment. Or at least, for end-of-the-month payment." Klein laughed shortly: "In a bullish market? Not a share will you get!" And, more to himself: "We have a job to-day!"

I left him, and he went to the Industrials. I borrowed a thousand Railroads from Vogel, Jr., for fifteen thousand kronen a share each, and caught Huth in the Rima crowd. "I bought Abels at 1800," he said. "Some one is squeezing the price. They are 1775 again." I said: "Buy another hundred thousand." He said: "How shall I cover it?" "Give a thousand Railroads," I said. He was satisfied and left me. From Mayer I got two hundred Railroads and from Gross five hundred. Then I met Bauch, the broker, and gave him an order to get me ten thousand Railroads on loan money. "Report at once, when you've got them. I'll be at Industrials," I said. He pushed into the milling crowd, and the next moment had disappeared behind bodies, faces and motioning hands.

When I came to the Industrials, where they were trading in Abels, I saw at first only a wall of perspiring backs. Necks were flushed, bald pates glistened. Behind this wall, in the center of the ring, a dry voice—Huth's voice—barked: "1830!" And another voice, a falsetto, shrilled: "One thousand to you at 1830!" and shrilled on: "I offer two thousand at 1800!" I pushed Pollak aside—the man with the glowing ears—bored my elbows into well-fed bellies, stumbled, shoved, stood upright, was shoved, and finally found myself next to Klein, close behind Huth. Around us were onlookers, idlers, curiosity-seekers. I bent over to Klein and asked: "Who is selling?" "Fenichel," he said. "Now you can see that it was no accident yesterday, with his brokerage bill!" And again the old man shrilled, with wet lips, from behind some one's back: "Two thousand at 1790!" Huth bought. He spied me and whispered into my ear: "The thousand Railroads are gone. Bought a hundred and forty thousand Abels. What now?" I answered: "Give another seven hundred and fifty Railroads. Buy seventy-five thousand Abels. But faster, faster! We won't get anywhere this way!" "1780!" slavered Fenichel. Huth bought and bought quickly, forcing the price up to 1890. Fenichel suddenly stopped and retreated. Next to me, Klein laughed: "Nebbich! He has shot his ammunition!" I asked: "For whom was he selling?" Klein laughed: "I should know? Perhaps for old Fischer, the Bear." "1920!" said Huth, in front. Others followed his example, and bought. The price went up to 1980, to 1990. Klein pulled me down to him by the lapel of my coat and whispered: "Everything may turn out all right yet!" I saw in his eyes that he had thought the battle lost.

Suddenly, Fenichel's falsetto shrilled anew; and at the same moment, an opening appeared in the confusion of bodies and De Letter's broad belly pushed forward. For the time it takes to draw a breath, there was a lull. Then, De Letter opened his mouth and spoke into this short silence: "I sell!"

Now, Klein and I knew where we stood. So this was the enemy! Not a casual individual, not just a speculator out for quick profits. This was war! There would be no mercy shown. "I offer!" said De Letter. "Take it!" said Huth. It was four thousand at 1950. "Take it!" said Huth. Ten thousand at 1900. "Take it!" said Huth. Now, it was twenty thousand at 1860. "I'll take it!" said Huth. Then, De Letter offered thirty thousand at 1800. "I'll take it!" said Huth. Then, he turned back to me and asked, in an undertone: "Shall I go on?" "Wait just a minute," I said. I looked around for Bauch, wondering if he had been successful in borrowing State Railroads. "Why wait?" asked Klein at my ear. I said: "I've got to know how many Railroads we have on hand." "Worries you've got!" said Klein. "Bauch didn't come back," I said. "Let Huth go and look for him," said Klein. Then: "Listen!" Over there, De Letter was shouting: "1580! I offer!" "I'll take it!" squeaked Klein, and jumped forward. And so the two stood suddenly face to face and gambled for their skins.

Huth left hurriedly to search for the other agent and sell the borrowed Railroads. Next to De Letter stood Fenichel; behind him, Ducrède could be seen; then, Fischer and Fischer's son-in-law. Confronting them was only Samuel Klein—I had been pressed back a little by Gross, Pollak, Jedlicka and a crowd of brokers and bank representatives, and stood, an idle witness, some four or five steps away from Klein, squeezed among the perspiring, howling, gaping crowd. Fischer and Fischer's son-in-law, then Fenichel, then Ducrède and then De Letter—it was a solid phalanx that offered Abel shares systematically and at any price. "At 1500! 1500!" roared De Letter. Klein bought, bought—laid money, bought, laid money. No use. "At 1440!" shouted Fischer, and his features drew apart in a nasty grin. "How is Schweizer-Glass?" he called over to Klein, and waved his hand. Swinging his arms, some one barked five orders, had them filled, and sank back into the flood of the faceless wave. "Mayer! Mayer!" sang a telephone messenger. "At 1420!" shouted Fischer's son-in-law. "At 1410!" croaked Ducrède, and De Letter roared: "I have a hundred thousand Abels at 1400!" Klein was turned partly toward me, and I could see his face. He said: "I'll take it!" Then, suddenly, he smiled. This is the end! I thought. De Letter roared: "Another hundred thousand at 1350!"

For a moment, there was silence. Klein did not answer. This is the end! I thought. "Why doesn't he buy?" Klein smiled. The other roared: "No buyer? A hundred thousand Abels at 1300! At 1280! At 1200!" Klein smiled. The Bendiener man poked him in the side and shouted: "What's the matter with Abels? Are you giving up? Buy! Buy!" And then, Klein pulled himself together. He seemed to grow tall. He cried, in a penetrating voice: "Who gives up? Who doesn't buy? I'll take a hundred thousand Abels at 1600! But not from De Letter! He is selling short! Who guarantees me that he'll pay his losses!"

The audacity of refusing De Letter's offers, of openly questioning his solvency at this moment, was so overwhelming that the sixty or eighty men standing around in an entangling, perspiring mass, suddenly held their breath. De Letter gasped audibly, then roared: "Insolence! Such an insult! I'll report this!" Klein screeched: "You still owe me for other losses! You don't pay!" And abruptly turning his back to him, he shouted: "I'll take a hundred thousand Abels from a reputable person. At 1600! At 1600! 1650!" The De Letter syndicate had apparently lost its head. Five or six of them put their heads together. Outsiders sold small lots, but the majority of the crowd held back, bewildered. "This Klein has a nerve!" said Pollak, and bought two hundred shares. Others bought. The price went to 1780, and when the man from the Lloyd's Bank came over to snoop around, Abel shares were being offered at 1950. He was so pleased that his spectacles glistened as he went to Alpine.

This was at ten minutes before one. The milling crowd thinned out somewhat after the group of bears had disappeared, and I pushed over to Klein, who was easily governing the market against weak buyers and sellers. He put his lips close to my ear and his ashen face was glazed with a confident smile as he whispered: "We'll have to take over around three million Abel shares. In ten minutes, the bell rings. If we haven't sold thirty thousand Railroads by that time, we'll be flat on our bellies when it comes to settle. For God's sake, where are the Railroads? Where is Huth? Where is the other?" He nodded response to Fischl's greeting and turned again to me. "If you don't bring the Railroads in time, we are gone!" he whispered once more; and then screeched: "I'll take it!" Again some shares had been offered. "I'll take it!" he called again—and then stopped abruptly.

When I gazed in the direction of his stare, I understood. There were Huth and Bauch, the two brokers, standing, their hands shoved into their pockets, looking over at us. Above twenty heads, Klein shouted at them: "Why don't you report?" And I called: "Everything all right?" Huth shouted: "All right? You should give orders! Not a share could I get for you!" and Bauch trumpeted: "He wants to borrow State Railroads, so that he can sell them!" People stopped to listen. Huth shouted: "They won't lend them to you!" And Bauch trumpeted: "How are you going to take over the Abel shares you bought, if you can't deliver Railroads?" The trading had ceased. All stood and listened. This was De Letter's retaliation. "De Letter has bribed them!" screeched Klein. But six or seven shouted: "I offer!" The price fell. Somewhere, there was a crowd within the crowd. In the center stood Balogh—Balogh, who had suddenly emerged, suddenly loomed among listeners. Solemnly, he talked, his open palms cleaving the air. "A man with a family, he had arrested for embezzlement!" I heard. "I offer!" shouted fifteen. The price fell. "I'll take it!" said Klein, forsaken, into the swirl. The price was already 1120 to 1100. "I'll take a hundred thousand!" screeched Klein. But no one paid any attention to him. They traded in Abels in lots of fifty down to 1030. Some one called out: "Toilet paper!"

This was not the worst. We might have checked the rout and supported and saved our stock despite Balogh, standing on a chair and talking, talking, cleaving the air with his fat palm. "And they'll be the ones who go to jail!" he concluded just then, but it was lost in the crowd. They were calling Klein's name, my name. This need not have mattered, but there—I hadn't noticed him until now—Herr Schornstein, the little banker, red cheeked and white haired, had come into the tumult. He had listened, had paled, had held a whispered conversation with the pimply man from the Lloyd's Bank—and had grown suddenly feeble, ten years older. With stiff, jerky little steps, he came up to me, and said: "Oh, good morning! Herr Abel is not here? We have a little settling to do. I must have some money to-day. You said you would be kind enough to repay the loan to-day." I was silent. He looked at me—yes, he forced himself to do so: he felt embarrassed, but as he looked into my eyes, his own widened in abysmal yet delicate terror, and from the threshold of another world came his quavering voice: "Or—half?" He stopped, an old man, and with parted lips he bent forward—around us roared the human sea—and listened for my answer. I had nothing to say; I stood silent. He whispered: "Half?—Not even half?" Then once more he seemed embarrassed: he looked past me. Yes, he forced his face into a somehow unearthly smile; he flushed deeply, and whispered: "Because—it is not my money, sir! It belongs to four thousand poor people, young man! I myself have nothing—I did not wish to be faithless to our own Exchange. I can't replace this money, sir!" He was ashamed, and looked past me. Then, he suddenly turned in a half circle and fell to the floor. A few sprang over to him; a few carried him away. They placed him on a divan in the club-room. Then came a man with a hand-bag and bent over him. And then some one took a handkerchief and spread it over his face.

But despite all this, everything might still have been saved. But some one, a small man—he was buying and losing money on our shares—began to slaver in a sudden rage and wailed: "Abel! Abel himself! Where is Abel? Why isn't Abel himself on the floor?" "Maybe he's already in jail!" said a jester. A few laughed; an eager twitter swept the room. But then, some one picked up the cry, insisting: "Abel should be here! Where is Abel?" "I offer, I offer!" croaked seven and seventeen. I saw Klein's arms sink, as though an invisible power had forced them down. "Abel! Johannes Abel!" shouted a few losers. And some one yelled: "Abel is a gentleman," and pointing to us, Klein and me: "but they are crooks!" The jester bleated: "Gentleman! You said it!" They argued about Johannes Abel. A bell rang. "The end!" said Klein at my side, and leaned heavily against me for a moment. No one paid any heed to us; every one pressed over to the right, to Bostensohn, and even before I could distinguish his voice in the roar, I saw laughing mouths opening wide in perspiring faces. Into the momentary silence, his voice grated: "Do you know the difference between an irrigator and the confessor of the Queen of Rumania?" Laughter crackled, surrounding him like an impenetrable wall of fireworks. No one took any heed of us; no one mentioned Abel any more or the Abel Works. "Do you know the difference—?" I heard again.

There was a crash. Few noticed it. Only a few saw that two or three of the huge plate-glass windows, running along the front of the Exchange, had been smashed by clubs or stones and lay shattered on the floor. Bostensohn rasped: "Do you know the difference between a nurse—?" Laughter crackled. But at the counter, an attendant was running from broker to broker, and I saw them hastily close their books. Suddenly, it grew lighter, brighter in the huge hall. Crowds were milling, shoving about the exits. Only those around Bostensohn still lingered. "What is a paradox?" asked Bostensohn. And then the attendant mounted the counter, held a megaphone to his lips, and shouted: "Silence! Silence!" All were quiet. But before the man could speak, a sound from the outside whistled into the silence. A polyphonic U-sound, mounting shrilly to an Eeee! and again: Phui! and whistling. "Silence, please!" panted the attendant. "Through the rear exit!" We ran silently across the stone floor. Whistling shrilled from the street through shattering windows. Only Bostensohn did not lose his head: "What is the difference between a Communist—?" But no one listened to him. The crowd was rapidly melting, running, clumping silently across the floor. Bostensohn shouted: "Abels! I offer!" The market was closed. Only Klein heard him. And when the tall man offered Abel shares at four hundred kronen, Klein said mechanically: "I'll take it!" But Bostensohn laughed and linked his arm into Klein's. "It's all over, my friend!" he laughed. Outside, the tumult grew.

When we climbed through the window of the janitor's kitchen into the rear court, the flame of the brief, fierce disturbance had been nearly stamped out. Only a few half-grown fellows threw stones after our taxi. A stone came flying through the open window and nicked Klein's forehead; he did not feel it and sat, silent and shivering, in a corner of the rattling cab. "To Abel!" he said; and while we glided through the pacified streets: "It's all over!"

IT was shortly after half-past-one when we mounted the stairs. Before the closed door of Abel's apartment, a crowd had gathered: his servant, agitated, was telling every one that he had been waiting here on the steps now for three hours and something must have happened, as he could not unlock the door. His key did not fit any more. And Birkmeier, silent and threatening, was there. Also, a process-server—the same who had tried to find Abel in his office. "For the third time since yesterday!" he said. And so we finally decided to call a policeman and a locksmith. They came. The door creaked and opened.

The air in the vestibule was stuffy. The doors leading to the other rooms were closed. Before the narrow slit of a curtained window, dust shimmered in sun-beams. Instinctively, we kept close together as we entered the dining-room. The windows stood wide open, as though some one had tried to rid the room of a sweetish odor—intangible, chilling—disturbing, alarming. Furniture, the cover on the table—the room was in scrupulous order. In just one spot, the floor had been recently scrubbed and was still a little damp. The door to the salon stood wide open. Here also everything seemed hastily put in order. When Birkmeier leaned on the back of a chair, it fell apart. Some one must have broken it and then carefully placed the pieces together again. And an agate ash-tray lay shattered on the floor near a small table. Also, the rug was out of place, as though something heavy had been dragged across the floor, from the dining-room to the bed-room.

The door of this bed-room was locked. The servant motioned feebly. We went back into the vestibule, from there through the bath-room, and through the music-room we came to the other door of the bed-room. It was open. We entered.

The curtains were drawn. Semi-darkness. An odor. Some one in bed. Light. It was Abel. Brains in his hair; his face a wound. Some one had put him to bed with nothing on but his dress-shirt and black tie. The policeman felt his arm. "He's stiff already!" he said and, somewhat helplessly, looking at us out of short-sighted eyes: "Who—?"

And then something loomed up out of an armchair, standing over there in a gloomy corner. Ruben Feuerbach. Ruben, his hair disheveled, his eyes sunk deep in dark, shadowed sockets. Startled, we all turned around and stared at him as he, reeling, staggering, slowly went toward the bed, toward the corpse. The policeman half raised his hand—on it was a broad wedding ring; he was married, had wife and children—he half raised his hand and said, somewhat helplessly: "Who—did—this?" And Ruben Feuerbach clenched the fingers of his right hand into a feeble fist, and with this fist he pounded his chest, pounded his chest many times and said: "I! I! I!"

The process-server looked at the dead man irresolutely for a moment; then, he pulled out a pencil, wetted it with his tongue and wrote something on the back of the summons that he was supposed to give to one Johannes Abel. Then, he left. I followed him with Samuel Klein, who suddenly felt ill. When we stepped from the vestibule onto the stairs, we heard voices below. "He is dead! I just came from upstairs!" said the process-server. He stood down there with two flatfoots. And as I looked over the banister, he added: "But you might as well go upstairs. The other two are there. What is it, anyway? Another summons?" "A warrant for their arrest," said one of the detectives. "Smuggling. Swindling. Four new complaints within the last two hours." They started up the stairs. I yanked Klein back into the vestibule and into a closet. We heard the detectives enter. They passed by the closet and went into the rooms. We ran down the stairs and into a taxi. "To the station!" "I want to go home!" moaned Klein. "Some one is sitting there, waiting for you!" I said. At that, he was silent.

At the station, we met Anton. "Abel was murdered!" I said. He turned away. I bought two tickets for a west-bound train. I wanted him to hear where I was going. "The train leaves in half an hour," he said thickly, as though he had not slept all night. But when he went for a moment into the waiting-room, where a couple of farmer boys were sleeping on the benches, I pulled Klein—who stood next to me, silent and shivering—outside. A taxicab whisked us to Kaiserplatz. There, we took a street-car to Quellengasse. There, once more into a taxicab. When it stopped at a street crossing, at a sign from the traffic officer, Klein grew still paler and closed his eyes. Then, a fourth taxi, to a suburban station. When the cab stopped before the entrance, two policemen were patrolling—probably by accident—up and down. I had one foot out of the car when Klein pulled me back, and as one of the officers inquisitively looked our way, I gave the order: "Drive on!" And so once more we raced along. After two minutes, we changed taxis. "Where to?" asked Klein, as we drove through the straight suburban streets. I meant to berate him for his ill-advised behavior at the station, but when I saw his face, I changed my mind. I said: "Now, we can only take one of the late trains, a local to the Moravian border. They are not watched. We'll go back, through the center of the city, across the Prater over the river. We'll take a train from one of the stations in the factory quarter. A train leaves the Ostbahnhof about nine-thirty and is at the factories before ten. Then, it will be dark." Klein asked: "Five hours! What'll we do in those five hours?" I called to the chauffeur: "Go back!" and he turned. "You mean, where will we keep ourselves?" I said to Klein. "In some café. The safest would be some artists' café in the neighborhood of the Prater. They won't look for us there." He nodded wearily. I saw that he wanted to say something, that he was struggling with himself. We were already entangled in the confusion of the traffic of the busier streets when he said, gazing past me into a corner of the cab: "We will have to pass my home. I would like to go up." And when he saw that I was about to object, he said, hastily: "For a moment! Just for a moment! I'll bring some money. I have money upstairs." And in a low voice: "Selma is sick!" I warned him: "They'll arrest you! Some one will be waiting for you upstairs!" He hardly listened: "I have a key to the back door. No one will look for me there." We passed the palace, turning the corner to the left. I remained in the cab. "Five minutes!" I called after him. I had very little money with me.

Otherwise, I would have left him right there. He pulled up his coat collar and disappeared.

He went through an alley, across the court to the servants' entrance. He climbed the narrow, winding stairs, through kitchen smells, past kitchen noises. On the second floor, he listened. He heard his sister's voice, probably talking with the servant. He could not distinguish what she was saying. His heart pounded dully. He waited. Slowly, he turned the knob. The door creaked and he drew back, terrified. A crack—it was something, at least a crack. There she was, alone. "Pst!" he hissed. "Pst!" She flew around, hand to heart, breathing in relief when she saw him. She said: "Some one has been sitting in the salon for the last two hours! Another is at the front door!" He breathed: "Selma—?" "Selma has fever," she whispered, harshly; then, softly: "Don't think of Selma now!" His lips moved, but no words came forth. Inside, somewhere, a sound—steps, coming closer, retreating. The two smiled at each other out of ashen faces. The woman said: "He walks up and down, the goy!" And then: "Don't worry about Selma. I'll stay with her." And then: "Go, now, Sami!" His head was leaning against the door-post as he whispered: "Moritz? Ignaz?" "Go, now! Go!" she said, and as once more the steps sounded, up—down, up—down, she pushed him outside and started to close the door. He remained. He did not move. He put his fingers between door and post and pressed his face against the slit: "Blanka—?" he asked. Her voice was hard when she said: "Blanka has packed her trunks and moved to a hotel." Then, he pulled back his hand, and the next moment the door had closed. But still he stood there, his face near the vanished slit. "Selma—?" he breathed. There was no answer. On legs which did not feel, with steps he did not guide, he went down the narrow winding stairs, through kitchen smells, past kitchen noises. Up with coat collar and out into the street. When the cab jerked ahead, he fell heavily into the seat beside me. He was silent. I asked no questions.

Twilight was falling, and when the houses grew less frequent and foliage peered fleetingly in at us, street lamps were burning. "Prater!" I said. At a dark street corner, we stopped and paid off the taxi. On the far horizon, above wooded hills, sickly red light still dripped from a low cloudbank. It was nearly dark. The gas lamps, forming a thinly drawn skirmish line before the foe, night, wore delicately colored veils in the faintly drizzling rain. Lonely trembled the puddles in the deserted street. But from across the street, where it was bordered by the park, and from beyond a greensward with artfully curving promenades, tinkled music. From out of dark, brooding tree-tops, a pointing giant-arm, high above the ridge of the ragged silhouette of countless booths, light cavorted in the early night-air. "Over there," I said, "next to the wax-figure booth, is a café. Later, we'll walk through the park—it'll take about fifteen minutes—and we'll be at the freight station of the warehouses. The mixed locals stop there." We skipped over the puddles; a pebble-strewn walk crunched under our heels. Silently, we walked across the greensward, Klein behind me. Now, noise and light lay close before us. Back of the long wooden shack of the scenic railway, rubbish was scattered about. From an empty crate, two figures arose and disappeared. A stray dog yelped. Deep darkness. Only through the openings between the different booths could we see the milling of the multitude on the brightly lit tent streets; faces, emerging for a moment and vanishing the next, here and there, behind the flimsy buildings. We stalked over rubbish, passed to the right of a sleeping circus wagon, groped through the dimness past the shooting gallery, the laugh cabinet and the booths of the photographers. There, between the wax-figure booth and the huge Ferris wheel, was a wider outlet—one of the tent streets here crawled out of the glare into the darkness of the park—and at this outlet, windows heavily curtained, stood the little artists' beer-shop where we meant to while away the time.

We waited in the black shadows of the wall and watched. Past us they walked, slowly, arm in arm—servants on their night off, laborers, shop-girls, street-car conductors—out of the glare into the coolness of the night-covered meadow, stood for a moment on the edge of light and darkness, blinded and breathing deeply; then, they went on and were soon no more than a gray fog-spot. And then, they were wiped out by the night. Klein gripped my arm convulsively; then, he released it. He laughed apologetically and mopped his forehead. "I thought the post over there had eyes—a policeman!" he said. I did not answer. Across the lighted walk, a merry-go-round tinkled monotonously. "When does the train leave?" asked Klein. I held my watch out of the shadow of the wall into the light and said: "More than four hours yet. Shall we go inside? No one will notice us. They'll probably take us for vaudeville agents." Klein said: "Why go inside? Let's go on the Ferris wheel. I've never been on a Ferris wheel in all my life!" I looked up in amazement, but Klein stood in the dark; I could not see his face. Only his eyes shimmered unuttered longings. I did not answer. Then, Klein left my side, stepped through the opening between the two buildings out into the glare, and when I followed him I saw him zigzag through the crowd toward the shooting gallery. A crowd of roysterers forced me aside, and when I arrived at the tent with its crackling of guns, Klein was nowhere to be seen. Cursing, I went from booth to booth.

"He's gone crazy!" I said to myself. "What do I need him for? I'll go without him!" Then, I saw him before the toy-shop with the grotesque dolls made of Plaster of Paris. The owner, an Italian or a gypsy, black-haired and lean, with the face of a corpse, was talking earnestly to him. They were discussing a tiny Plaster of Paris man with a huge head fastened to a point. If you pushed it a little, the head began to nod—said *yes, yes, yes, yes,* everlastingly. But Klein did not buy. Klein looked searchingly into the painted eyes of the nodding head and smiled silently. The Italian said: "If you want to see—back there are bigger figures—" We went on, and when I bought sausages and some bread at a little stand, Klein again disappeared. It must have taken me half an hour to find him.

There was a building with a gigantic green sign—"Shoot a Hat!" it read. There were two rows of huge dolls, adventurous clowns, tramps, cavaliers, vagabonds of wax and rags, with high hats—two rows, one behind the other. When one appeared, the other would sink abruptly into a crevice—a continuous up and down. To this, an automaton screeched music. There stood Klein, his hat on the back of his head. I could not see his face. I saw only his back and his left hand, hanging pale, delicate and lonely out of the sleeve of his coat. But his right hand was intensely busy. He was flinging large balls at the dolls to knock the hats off their heads. The hats? Into your face, you dirty sow, right smack into your face!

"Klein!" I cried. He turned around and came to me. In his eyes gleamed feeble excitement, but his face was ashen. "Klein!" I said. I started for the beer-shop, and he walked at my side, setting foot before foot, as one who is surprised at himself, who is afraid, intoxicated with a newly discovered fear of himself.

A faceless beggar sat at the entrance in the warm odors from the kitchen and nodded, but the faces of the seven men at the first table—what were they drinking? Beer?—were huge and crimson, like the rising moon. You must swing sideways like a dancer, between chair and brown wall, if you wish to pass them. What has caught you? What is holding you by the coat and what tugs there? The one with the green hair—leave her alone! She is a corpse out of the river! Far in the rear, where the five are sitting, there is still room at the table. They are talking soundlessly, with gestures. It doesn't matter—they are dumb. They are wearing threadbare dress-suits, and their white celluloid shirt-fronts shine. Mutes? They are the trumpeters of the air circus orchestra—the tall, cheekless one is the herald who sounds the fanfare before each number of the evening. They are not mutes. One of them whispers: "Trumpeters don't talk much. Trumpeters have tuberculosis of the larynx." Farther in front, they are dancing. The whole low room—every person, every girl, every glass, every light—is moving. On the outside of the circle of the dancers, cut off by the shoulder of the whore—what does this hard face with the pirate's chin want? His one eye stands sharp and alert below the eyebrow. Above the other eye, the fresh, reddish plaster—was it not placed there only recently, to make him unrecognizable? Disguise? But already he has disappeared again. The turn of the dance-step has brought in his place the thin, expressionless misery-face of his partner. Panorama!

Who watches there? Klein pulls me down to him, muttering: "Detective?" There is a tall, broad-chested man who has his eye on us; who is shuffling on one spot to the rhythm of the music, swaying to and fro and staring at us over the narrow shoulders and head of his partner. In his eyes is something distant, something intangible, as you note in persons who squint slightly. He is acquainted with the pimps, the whores and the cab-drivers. His huge torso is tightly crammed into a too close-fitting black suit, much too short in the sleeves. He wears no collar, but a flowery, woolen vest; and his stiff, black, round hat is pushed back from his perspiring forehead. His hand, which is spread broadly on the back of his partner's waist, is as red as raw meat—is clumsily alive, bestial. The pocket of his black suit bulges with something heavy. Why does he stare at us like that? But suddenly, his face is wiped out by a wall of dancers, and Klein laughs. A brandy? Why not a brandy? "I was never on one of those Ferris wheels," said Klein to the trumpeter. The one who is dancing with the colossus in the tight-fitting suit—that's no woman; that's the female impersonator in the Fairy Palace. A fat man in evening clothes comes through the rear entrance. From table to table, he carries that round head of his. Is not that the one with the pleading hand? Is not that the pug-dog who reeled across the dark courtyard that night? "Where is Herr Gutjahr?" he asked the manager. "Where is Gutjahr, Herr Gutjahr?" His face quivers. Is his hand quivering? "I'll find him, if I have to look through every beer-shop! I'll find him! I'll report him to the police!" He gargles and quivers, and dashes out of the place. The herald—the one without cheeks; the one who sounds the fanfare—is plying knife and fork as if cutting something, but there is nothing on his plate. Matches! Matches! Shoestrings! "Abel has been murdered!" says Klein to me, through the smoke. The five talk to each other of many things and do not say a word, and music grates, grates right through the brain. A brandy? "With the balls—the hats? No! Into your face, you dirty sow, right smack into your face!" Klein tells the trumpeter.

A man goes from table to table. A man goes from table to table, and laughs. From table to table, a little old man with black glasses gropes his way and peddles tiny men of rubber. When he presses the tiny rubber man on the behind, it pisses. When it pisses, he laughs. "Plaything?" he says, presses, laughs and goes on. Is he coming to us? He presses the tiny rubber man and laughs four short laughs—always four short laughs. Klein stares into his face and gasps:

"Feuerbach!" "Feuerbach!" I gasp. The old man nods and does not recognize us. "You buy?" he asks, and already he is laughing at the next table and at the next. Klein bends over to me and whispers: "Isn't he dead?" The five are telling each other long stories without words. The lean Italian or gypsy who sells the dolls with the nodding heads is talking with the manager. "That's the one with the nodding dolls," Klein says to the trumpeter. And the trumpeter bends close so that we can hear him and whispers hoarsely: "Did you go into the cabinet where he keeps the big figures? He puts corpses in Plaster of Paris! He gets the corpses from the dissecting-room and puts them in Plaster of Paris!" The trumpeters nod in assent. One of them rattles in his throat: "He has put a skull on his own shoulders!" Then, they all chatter soundlessly and wave their fingers in the air. Klein laughed with them. Then, he leaned over to me, with terrified eyes, and rubbed his temples. He whispered: "If only I don't lose my mind!" It was hot. Over there, they were dancing.

From the front door came screams. About thirty of the people ran outside. There was more room. On they dance, faster. A woman sings, laughs, shrieks. I squeeze myself into the corner at the right and suddenly stand before the piano. It is playing—no one sits before the keyboard. Spectral fingers race over the keys, press them down, hop, trill, staccato, cadences—a gruesome, ghostly animation. Then, another scream outside, a woman's voice crying! The door flies open. The dance stops. Sudden silence. Silence. Only the piano hammers on. A ghost plays "Valencia." And through the open door crashed the cry: "Police!" All—up and out. Through the window? Through the rear door? Jostling, shoving. "The big fellow hit some woman!" "He was beating Anna. Then, some one came to help her. A strange woman. She jumped at his throat. He punched her in the face. Why did she have to mix in?" "A whore?" "Member of the Party!" "Hurry up! Let's get out of here! The dicks are whistling for help!" Shoving, jostling. The door. Far back in the room, the ghost plays "Valencia."

Outside, held by three policemen, stands the man in the tight-fitting suit. An old prostitute, a hag, her hair dyed a disgusting greenish black and bulging like a mop above her forehead, spits, jabbers and squirts filthy epithets at the woman who had tried to help her and who now hangs, stunned by the sledge-hammer fist of the pimp, semi-conscious over the arm of a policeman. I see only the back of her; for a moment, I see auburn hair and delicate shoulders, sagging in helplessness. We run. Klein, at my side, says, giggling horribly: "Mirjam Feuerbach! The girl that fainted—that was Mirjam Feuerbach!" But one of the policemen blows his whistle and, like rats, we scurry between the booths into the darkness.

We run. Then, with six or seven strange hoodlums, pimps, pickpockets and whores, we crouch behind the empty circus wagon until the police have passed on. Run. Pebble-walk and meadow. There, two lie entwined and pant. Run. The edge of the park. Bushes, faintly illuminated from over there, from the glare behind the booths. Among the trunks of the trees, deep darkness breathes, and the odor of damp earth. Our way leads through there. And the backward glance still finds the receding light, until only a single lamp remains, a trembling dot, over the solitude of the low tree-tops. Klein stops and whispers: "That is the lamp on the mast of the Ferris wheel!" And if you look sharply, you can also see a tiny, lonely flag fluttering in the night wind.

Train, northbound. A third-class coach, draughty and almost empty. A farmer's wife with a basket of chickens; a fat man, a village grocer, perhaps—no one else. "Only across the border! Only across the border!" said Klein, close to my ear. It was a mixed train, freight cars and coaches; it stopped at every station—an eternity at every station. So it was after midnight, in Hartburg, when we saw the gendarme on the station platform. We left the train on the opposite side and ran ahead to the mail coach. Behind the lighted window sat a man, sorting letters. No chance there. We had to press ourselves close against the coach, for on the next track, from the opposite direction, a train raced into the station. It was the Copenhagen-Nice Express, halting at this cross station for about half a minute. Before us was the lighted window of a compartment. On cushions, among cushions of red velvet, sat a serene, cool, light-blonde Nordic girl, easy of mind and at peace with Fate, reading a book. A slender gentleman, fashionably dressed, a foreign paper drooping from his hand, lifted his groomed body out of a corner, stepped to the opposite window and tried to read the name of the station. "Vienna?" asked the girl. "No," said the man. "When will we be in Venice?" asked the girl, already half absorbed in her book. We could not hear the answer. Already, the train moved; already it glided, carrying the well-equipped, the electrically lighted island of the untouched, on winged wheels into the night.

No chance there, either. We ran back, back along the dimly lighted coaches of our train. Through one of them passed the gendarme, on to the freight cars. Bricks were being transported, and in one of them was cement in barrels. Another, enclosed, seemed to be empty. "46 men or 6 horses and 4 men," we read on the side of it. I helped Samuel Klein to climb in while the train was already moving. It was cold, and we crouched in a corner, among rubbish and empty boxes. Wind and frost and weariness. Aren't your lids already closing over your eyes? Push yourself deeper into the stinking straw, brother! Sleep!

Then, lanterns somewhere, and bayonets. We were arrested . . .

ASH-WEDNESDAY

ON the fourth day, at about eleven o'clock, the turnkey came and said: "Some one to see you!" I said: "I'm sleeping now. They've been cross-examining me for the last three nights! A horse couldn't stand it!" "Some one to see you; get a move on!" said the turnkey. I said: "You put something in the food that works on the bowels. I haven't had fifteen minutes' sleep in four days." "Some one to see you!" said the turnkey, and pulled the covers off me. I said: "You can't fool me! The newspapers ought to know about it! Torture, that's what it is! Inquisition diet No. 3!" The turnkey pulled me up by the arm, and said: "Some one to see you! Anyhow, it is diet No. 2. All that you have to do is confess; I don't know what you've been up to—you know that best yourself." By now, we were walking along the echoing corridor with the many little doors. There was still the iron gate—and now we were in the main building. We pressed through the many little groups of dully excited or festively attired witnesses, waiting to be called in the various cases. The visitors' room—a bare chamber with barred windows, a table and two benches—was next to the office of the examining magistrate, a small, pale person with inflamed eyes and innumerable pimples, loud-mouthed and loquacious. It was Bostensohn who had requested to see me. He waved his hand at me and declared that he would privately interest himself in my case. He winked at me craftily and threatened me with a lot of nonsense. He made obvious efforts to get a chance to speak to me alone for a few minutes. After he had been told that his time was up and had been escorted into the corridor, the turnkey, for some reason or other, made no move to take me back to my cell. I heard the examining magistrate next door working on somebody; but as the door was shut, only scraps of the examination reached my ear.

The magistrate said: "Well! Well! Now, tell me! With the —well—come! Come! With the heavy silver candelabrum. You hit him.—Why?" Silence. The magistrate once more: "Why, I ask you. Did you mean to tickle him?" He snickered. "All right, you didn't mean to tickle him. But to—well? Now, don't let me do all the talking! But to—to fracture his skull! To fix him, as they say. Listen! What are you trying to do? You admitted at the time that you did it! So, no humbug now! No loss of memory or mental derangement—we know all about that! That always starts the day the prisoner sees his lawyer alone for the first time! . . . I didn't say anything. Well! Come now! Have you nothing to say?" Silence. And into this silence came Ruben's very high-pitched voice: "I! I! I killed him!" The magistrate crowed: "Well! At last! And now, give us the details! Well? So you demanded money of him? And when he refused—you—why don't you say something, man! Then, you took the candelabrum—" But just then, the turnkey gave me a sign and led me back to my cell.

The second thing that must be related here happened in the fourth month—cross-examination had long since ceased. The courts had been closed in the meantime for vacation. Doctor Mondschein had made four motions for release from jail and Klein's lawyer had also made four motions, but all were denied on account of possible collusion—although there was not the least chance of that, as the affidavits had been signed and sealed. The date of the trial had not been set, as there were some affidavits from Holland and America still missing. This was pure vindictiveness on the part of those hungry crows, the judges. A complaint about treatment was also ignored. At that time, in the fourth month, in the forenoon of a cold, bright autumn day, we were taken for our daily exercise for the first time together with the Dreier gang and the long-termers—the State was trying to reduce the personnel. About eighty of us clumped around the courtyard, two by two, along the stinking front of the kitchen windows, then diagonally across to the high outer wall, where grows that lonely bush, the blackthorn—at that time, it was covered with red berries, and from my cell, I could see how these berries lured the birds—and along this wall and along the window-front of the guard-rooms and past the morgue and past the stairway and along the stinking kitchen windows and again diagonally across to the blackthorn. There, when I tramped, fists against my chest, past the stairway for the seventeenth or twenty-seventh time—there, near the steps, was Samuel Klein. He had grown a beard and he must have been ill, for they had given him a chair to sit on. He sat, dull and listless, and only gave a feeble start when I passed close by him. But then I was already gone. A guard stood on the stairs and watched us closely. When I passed Klein the next time, I asked out of the side of my mouth: "Anything new?" And he said simultaneously, "No, nothing!" He looked at me, heavy-lidded, and slowly shook his head, shook his head. I didn't understand this and thought it over as I tramped, tramped around the yard. The next time, I whispered: "Don't mention name of customs-house inspector!"—but he made no sign, and it seemed to me that there was deep terror or dull sadness in his eyes. Moving away from him, I saw globules of perspiration glistening on his forehead. I could not understand what had happened to him. When I passed him for the third time, I deliberately stumbled and let myself fall to the ground. I said: "Keep quiet about Leiser account. Textiles O.K. Of course, Abel did everything!" The guard barked: "Up there! Move on!" I squirmed and cried: "Wrenched my foot!" and said quickly: "Everything on Abel! We don't know anything!" But Klein was silent, looked at me and was silent, and when I asked: "What's the matter?" the guard was already beside me and as I perforce had to limp now, he had me taken back to my cell.

Two months went by because the American affidavit had been incomplete and had to be sent back for revision. Then it came, but the opinion of the auditor, the expert, was not in; the court had decided to have three experts pass on the question as to whether or not the interests of hidden resources were to be figured in the gross profits. Then—it was on the day that our fifteenth motion for release on bail had been refused—a newspaper fell out of Doctor Mondschein's pocket. The turnkey did not see me hide it, as he was holding the gate open for the Doctor. I must remark here that the examining magistrate refused to let me have any newspapers—"because the privilege accorded by the new press laws of newspaper discussion of incidents which the Court has not yet decided whether or not to include in the proceedings may tend to obstruct the conduct of the trial, should the prisoner be given the opportunity of acquainting himself with them," as he said, verbatim, in the denial of my eighth complaint about the treatment I was receiving. Doctor Mondschein, a very cautious and ambitious man, must have turned it over in his mind ten times before he took the risk of manœuvring the newspaper into my hands. That it contained something of the utmost importance, I knew before I unfolded the paper in my cell. It was a copy of *Truth*, of the day previous. On the front page, I read:

DID THE ABEL SWINDLE SYNDICATE MURDER ITS HEAD?

The Abel scandal is spreading. Among the Abel-controlled firms, one crash follows the other like a rolling avalanche, and—despite all assurances—the mystery surrounding the murder of the syndicate's chief still has not been cleared up.

Herr Hofrat Meier and his famous detectives shroud themselves in silence. One of our reporters, calling at headquarters on Mathildenstrasse, was *denied admission*, like an obnoxious beggar. One asks, but receives no answer. The public, interested in knowing the facts, is ignored. No doubt there is a reason. But the public has a right to ask for truth and information. And if our officials, paid by the community, fail, the press will not be swerved from its duty. We are not through with Hofrat Meier and his underlings; we know where the shoe presses. To-day, a more important question cries for attention. One clutches at one's heart, and asks:

WHAT WERE THE MOTIVES OF THE ABEL MURDER?

Herr Hofrat Meier does not answer and refuses to see a journalist who is trying to do his duty. Herr Meier has other worries. It is common knowledge that the unfortunate marriage of his daughter to a notorious deadbeat gives him quite a few headaches. Well and good; let us come to the point, as the Englishman says. More of Herr Meier later. He need not answer. We will fulfill our journalistic obligations unaided by him. We have decided to *investigate on our own account*, regardless of cost or difficulties, and stand before the public to-day as the only newspaper to turn the searchlight of truth on the Abel case.

We have, first of all, the greatest interest in the person Ruben Feuerbach, who has been held in jail for four months now. *A sickly boy.* One involuntarily raises one's brows and asks:

ARE BOYS MURDERERS?

A purloined package of cigarettes—well and good. A few gambling debts—well and good. A piquant adventure—who wants to play the part of a narrow-minded moralist?

—well and good. All this we are ready to believe of him, this youth with his pleasing looks and his black curls. But MURDER? The brutal taking of another man's life? We shall see! But we must start at the beginning.

The murdered Johannes Abel owned, as we have just discovered, the house Wiesnerstrasse 14, EZ 225/97, section IX in the registration office—an old, squalid tenement-house, in which the dead man himself lived years ago. We are referred to Frau Aloisia Gutjahr, who was Abel's housekeeper during that time and still lives there. The ailing old lady, who receives us in an immaculately clean little room, is heartbroken over the death of her former employer. It needed every method of persuasion known to the trained journalist to convince the old lady that she owes it to the public conscience to answer our questions. "My dead benefactor was ever a noble character," she says, "and that this Ruben Feuerbach has killed him—" We thought it advisable to interrupt: "You know this Feuerbach?" A faint smile played around the lips of the old lady as she answered: "He was born in this house *and I assisted his mother in her critical hour.*" We asked: "Do you believe him to be the murderer?"

"NO!"

was the decided answer! "This Feuerbach is a mentally retarded fellow, a half-wit, but no murderer. Herr Abel had the most *peculiar habits* during the last years of his life. *Very likely, one of his boon-companions or business associates did away with him.*"

"Do you suspect any one in particular?" we asked, casually. But Frau Gutjahr apparently values her peace of mind and is not very anxious to taste the delights of one of Herr Meier's cross-examinations, for she divulged nothing further. She was kind enough, however, to direct us to her son for further information. Until lately, he also lived in this house, but has moved into a more comfortable apartment at Hechtgasse 32.

There, to our regret, we learned that Herr Gutjahr is at present out of town. But we were directed to one Anton Horak as a possible informant, a merchant and friend of Gutjahr's, also residing at Wiesnerstrasse 14. Herr Horak occupies a very humble room in the basement of the rear-house. He received us in a larger anteroom, filled with numerous plain bedsteads for so-called "night lodgers." Herr Horak is a merchant and, as are so many to-day, obliged to handle different commodities. He deals in old clothes and in meat which he buys from the farmers. He is also a confidential agent of the police—and there is a touch of irony in the fact that he, employed by Herr Hofrat Meier, *had to learn from us that Johannes Abel had been murdered.* "I don't read the papers," he said, in excuse. Indeed, Herr Horak is apparently a hard-working man who is absorbed in his business and has no thoughts for anything else. He knew the dead man only slightly, as a poor tenant of the rear-house usually knows the owner. But he knows Ruben Feuerbach. "Do you believe he murdered Herr Abel?" we ask. Herr Horak became greatly agitated.

"NO!"

he exclaimed. "No!" And as our cautious, middle-class person is wont to do, he thought the matter over carefully and then repeated, softly: "No!" And then we told him of the developments in the Abel case. Although we had come to a little-informed man, even an eccentric who does not read a paper, we also receive from him the emphatic answer:

"RUBEN FEUERBACH IS NO MURDERER!"

Coming from the lips of this plain man, these words, we think, are of nearly as much weight as if they came from an experienced psychologist and reporter.

But still we are not satisfied with our investigation. Who is this Herr Abel? we ask ourselves again and again. Who is this Abel, who keeps this simple-minded, half-idiotic boy, several decades younger than himself, in his apartment at night? Does he lead

A DOUBLE LIFE?

We did not shirk an additional trip, and sought and gained entrance to Abel's apartment. And we will speak out our mind: according to our conviction, this dwelling holds the key to the riddle. This is the dwelling of a—there is no other word for it—

SARDANAPALUS.

It throws a glaring light on the conditions of our era to discover that this Johannes Abel *led a double life.* On the one hand, banker, king of industry, wholesale merchant, president of powerful branches of our civic body—in short, a pillar of society. On the other hand, a debauchee, who did not hesitate to dishonor his reverend years with nightly drinking orgies and other excesses in his luxuriously furnished apartment. We do not pretend to be moralists. But when we picture our newly rich cavaliers leaning back in their armchairs, in cozy corners, with ladies of easy virtue on their knees and puffing their fat, imported cigars, while the champagne corks pop, then we ask ourselves: *was it not bound to happen,* that which happened? Was it not inevitable that—perhaps after such an orgy—some one should kill this besotted old man who led a double life?

BUT WHOM?

Ruben Feuerbach? A simpleton who no doubt was only the court-jester for the "ladies" at these revels, and who could therefore only profit by these dissipations? Our name would have to be Hofrat Meier and we would have to have private worries over a dissolute son-in-law to be blinded on this score. The criminologist will ask himself: *Cui bono?* To whose advantage would it have been if Abel's spendthrift habits ceased? His boon-companions'? *Would it not more likely have been his business associates,* who had to stand by and watch their mutual capital slide through his fingers? It will be remembered what Birkmeier, a member of Parliament, said in these columns last Wednesday about the experiences he had with these business associates. We ask: what are these persons NOT capable of? They are in jail, accused of fraud. They are in jail, accused of credit swindle. They are in jail, accused of evading customs duties. With raised hands, we ask Herr Hofrat Meier—with raised hands, we ask the prosecuting attorney: *Is he certain that these two men have not also the death of their associate, Johannes Abel, on their conscience?* Our hypothesis is: There is only one Abel case. The Abel murder and the Abel bankruptcy are ingredients of the same stew. The parties responsible for the crash manufactured an alibi for themselves by murdering Abel and shifting all commercial sins to his shoulders! And the law? It holds the guilty ones—but throws its full weight on a backward, feeble, pretty boy, who has not even the strength to lift the heavy candelabrum with which the murder was committed. Who believes it? Herr Hofrat Meier! And the public stands aghast and asks: Why does not an official with so many private worries retire on his pension? We are awaiting his answer.

Yes, this had Emmerich Farkas's touch. I read the article three times before I hid the paper. I was bewildered. That Ruben Feuerbach was not the murderer—the real truth I did not know at the time—I was convinced from the first. Farkas's attack upon Klein and myself I did not take seriously—as can easily be understood. I thought smilingly of good Doctor Mondschein, who, it seemed, was of the opinion that there might be some truth in this accusation of murder.

But the article brought one result, so to speak, overnight. The article had appeared on a Wednesday. On Thursday evening, between the two slices of bread which the prisoners awaiting trial received, lay a folded piece of paper. It proved to be a torn piece of cheap stationery and was, peculiarly enough, saturated with a strong perfume. Whore-paper, I thought. The letter was written by unskilled fingers on an obviously decrepit typewriter with the oversize, worn-out letters one usually finds on documents of police stations and subordinate officials. This is what I read:

"Take advise and confesz wat already the Publik Paper knows. Dont acuse Young boy wat is poor orfan his father dead his mother is crasy. Would not help anyvay. When you come out works the nife. The other Jew crook too better confesz it is good for him or he croak outside.

"The Avenging Black Hand."

I read this letter very carefully several times. "Greetings from the murderer!" I said to myself, and shoved the paper into my pocket. But the next day, after a substitute turnkey had been in my cell for a little while, I could not find the note again. It had disappeared. I told Doctor Mondschein about it. He shrugged his shoulders. No, he did not believe me. I was not even questioned in regard to the murder accusation, and if at times I speculated about the smuggled note and its disappearance, I was soon busy with other things that concerned me vitally. For the date of trial had been set virtually overnight, Klein's, mine and Balogh's —Balogh having abruptly changed front, being now very willing to talk to the prosecuting attorney, as a repentant and informing sinner, no doubt with a promise of acquittal in his pocket. The presiding judge, a fat man, a bundle of black gown, with pig-eyes and glasses, and with a tiny brush of a mustache on his short upper lip, addressed him, therefore, in an oily voice, as "Herr Balogh," while Klein and I were referred to as "defendants" and were even denied the privilege of sitting down while testifying. After all, Balogh had only to narrate the facts connected with the customs-house swindle—facts that were apparently considered simple and clear and therefore were the first ones to be aired.

But even here, Balogh's rôle was soon considerably curtailed. What he deposed was simple truth. He did not even omit details which tended to incriminate himself, if only he could make things look black for me or Klein. The prosecuting attorney, a bony vulture, a skeleton in red, nodded rhythmically to his words, as a teacher does to the well-recited lesson of his pupil. His testimony, despite its frankness, was of little danger to us. Balogh stood there at the bar, a little man, in the painfully new and ultra-modern suit that he had bought with Klein's money; stood there and —there is no other word for it—functioned. He talked like a well-oiled machine. Klein had put at his disposal cocoa on which no duty had been paid and had given him the order to smuggle the goods and to sell them to the Abel concern as smuggled goods. He spoke for an hour and a half—also of his domestic circumstances, his straitened finances, his otherwise unquestionable honesty—"A Balogh!" he sighed—without being interrupted. The presiding judge—his name was Porak—nodded to the prosecuting attorney. No, no questions. But Doctor Mondschein rose, all spongy forcefulness, and commenced to put his questions in a voice of deceptive geniality. At the third, Balogh faltered; at the fifth, he stumbled. No, no!—What possible advantage could Klein have had in making use of an unreliable middleman in putting over questionable deals with his "old friend Abel" (so said Mondschein and raised his hand in a solemn gesture, for no reason that I could see). No, for that Balogh had no explanation. And when the prosecuting attorney came to his rescue with a platitude—"profiteering here, profiteering there," said he, or "a profiteer is a profiteer"—Mondschein suddenly puffed up like a frog and, in the tenor of professional and affected indignation, sang his protest against such insult to his client. The presiding judge reminded him that only Abel or Klein could have been insulted thus; that one was dead and the other—well, Klein was represented. But how was he represented! His lawyer—I have forgotten his name—was a lisping zero, a small, near-sighted man who, when he ought to have registered some protest, would invariably disappear behind the table as into a crevice. The celebrated lawyer whom Klein had engaged shortly after the arrest had disagreed with the presiding judge during the preliminary proceedings and—sacrificing his client to his vanity—had withdrawn from the case a week before the trial; Klein did not have the money to pay an enormous retainer to another lawyer of repute, and so he was being defended ex officio by this cipher.

So the burden of the defense was naturally carried by my Mondschein. His catch-questions were crude, but effective. After a half-hour's cross-examination, there was not as much of Balogh's glib testimony left as there was dirt under the highly polished nails of his solemnly gesticulating right hand. That he—now so meekly confessing—had denied everything when first arrested, was an indisputable fact. (While establishing this, Mondschein slapped his left hand exactly eight times against the police protocol which he held in his spongy right hand.) That it had not been Balogh, but Klein and I, who had reported the customs-house swindle—Mondschein's forefinger stabbed into space—this also was an indisputable fact. "Why the sudden change of front now?" Mondschein asked, turning to Balogh. And, very confidentially: "Out of revenge? To pull the informers down into the abyss with you?" (So he said!) And in his deceptively genial voice: "Or, Herr Balogh, has our honorable opponent, the prosecuting attorney, as we are going to prove by and by, promised immunity, in case you—" But he did not get any further, and the incident ended in a futile professional quarrel, which quickly abated. The bony vulture pecked at Mondschein's spongy belly a few more times—Klein's lawyer disappeared behind the table—and the bundle occupying the judge's seat did not allow the question to stand. Mondschein, at any rate, entered a plea of nullity and waived everything else. For a moment, there was quiet. Only De Letter, bulging in the first spectators' row and smelling faintly of garlic, chuckled audibly. This aroused the bundle to asthmatic energy. The garlic evaporated. The bundle calmed down, and said, mildly: "The witnesses!" And the clerk barked into the next room: "Birkmeier! Birkmeier! Come in!"

And there he was, an apoplectic elegant—yes, an elegant, in a complete outfit of light gray, immaculately pressed; only the cut of his coat still reminded one of his former leaning toward the old order. First of all, he took exception to the manner in which the clerk had called him. He was a representative of the people, he explained, and should be treated accordingly. The bundle softened, and admonished the clerk. Then, the full-beard deposed particulars of himself. He was not exactly a member of the House, but a district delegate of the Nationalists. Occupation? "Politician," said Herr Birkmeier. Mondschein said: "What of it?" but when the bundle in the judge's chair asked if he wanted this remark to go into the record, he said coolly that it was not necessary. Then, the examination began.

Nothing was said about the smuggling—Birkmeier energetically disclaimed the slightest knowledge of it. His valiant full-beard trembled, so stern was his voice. But the prosecuting attorney had subpœnaed him for a quite different purpose. He wanted to know about the affair of the moth-eaten cigarettes and the transaction of the increase of capitalization, which, turned around, had made a dual transaction necessary and had cost the life of a poor devil of an aristocrat. Birkmeier's testimony was given with great emphasis —when, for some reason or other, he was asked how many men a branch factory in Poland had employed, he answered as firmly as if he were unmasking a foe. "One hundred and thirty!" came the declaration, harsh, loud and irrefutable. But when Doctor Mondschein casually asked him how he fared with his own shares by this increase of capitalization, he began to suffer from a sudden loss of memory. That was a long time ago, he said. "Naturally," said the prosecuting attorney, and Doctor Mondschein said, in his friendliest manner: "Then, let's talk about something else!"—to wit: about the synthetic chocolate delivered to the Army during the war, he said; while the formula had been concocted by Klein, it had certainly been carried out by Birkmeier. Mondschein said, suavely: "Isn't there something about a previous conviction, Herr Birkmeier?" No, that was long ago; Birkmeier could not remember it clearly. He commenced to cut a deplorable figure. The prosecuting attorney became alarmed. Doctor Mondschein became more and more affable. The presiding judge tried to save what could be saved, and shouted in unreasonable wrath: "We are not in a coffee-house!" They collected their forces.

Then, out of this newly formed line, the red skeleton advanced and said, smoothly: "All this is of minor importance—" Mondschein inquired, innocently: "Then, the complaints of food adulteration and cigarettes are dismissed?" The vulture said: "I can't commit myself, at present!" And

Mondschein: "But if—" The skeleton screeched: "I protest against the interruption!" And immediately after, calmly, even beguilingly—only, one did not know why or wherefore—"All this is not important. We are coming to the main issue." And, turning to Birkmeier: "Herr Birkmeier, you are on record as saying something about the abominable and criminal—" Mondschein, on general principles, cried: "I object!"—but the prosecuting attorney thundered, with greater emphasis: "—criminal undermining of our country's unstable exchange, through the sale of kronen in Hamburg and London!" Birkmeier followed the cue. His hour had come. He turned to me and Klein; he pointed his fat forefinger; his beard opened in a fissure, and he roared: "Those two! They did it!" The bundle came to life, and said, unctuously: "In consecutive order, please!" And Birkmeier testified until the table of the stenographers groaned. He knew buyer, seller, agent, middleman—every little detail of the deliberately complicated transaction. How? He talked like a book, and knew well what he was saying. "When a bank refused," he said, "to accept the kronen sold abroad and—at the request of the buyer—to be deposited here; when a bank demanded, before accepting the kronen, the proof that the Central Bureau had permitted this transaction—this permit was procured by forged invoices, proving to the Central Bureau that necessary foodstuffs had been imported and had to be paid for abroad in kronen." He unbuttoned his light-gray coat, pulled a small packet of papers out of his pocket and said: "A number of these invoices, printed by order of the defendants, for this criminal and treasonable purpose, I herewith submit to the Court." Which he did.

That, to be sure, was a high trump. That was serious. The bundle and the red skeleton nodded understandingly toward each other. Mondschein was silent. The cipher was not visible. On the last bench, De Letter snickered as he munched his cheese sandwiches. As for me, I bent forward and sideways a little to catch Klein's eye, if possible—for the guard who had brought us in was sitting between us.

Klein sat there, seemingly unmoved. He had actually grown a beard during his detention—a reddish, uncared-for and at the same time wretchedly thin beard, hanging indescribably forlorn around his chin and crawling, in ringlets, up his cheeks into his graying hair. This frail, stoop-shouldered man was still attired in Western clothes. But his body had reverted to the ghetto—to the steppe. The steppe—that is what showed in the melancholy eyes, out of which all joy of acquiring, all the triumph of a calculating brain, all the fervor of holding one's own had gone completely during the six months in jail—had been erased. I—between judge and prosecuting attorney, at the time when utmost alertness was demanded; when I was fighting for my freedom—I myself, for a moment, startled and shocked, leaned my cheek against the time-polished smoothness of the prisoners' bench and listened to the pounding of the blood through my veins. For a moment, I realized that—Good-by, comrade, friend!—something was drawing to a close and would soon be irrevocably over: that the masks about me were not judging us, but an era, a natural phenomenon—were judging themselves. For a moment only—the next, I was myself once more, alert and ready to spring and defend myself against the attackers. Later, as the trial dragged on, I lost all interest and could not recover it . . . But to return—the next moment, I heard Birkmeier's voice again. He was talking of Abel's insurance contracts and his purchase of the baronial estates. Birkmeier had information, information, information! "And so it was brought about," he said, "that a national asset—and a timber tract is a national asset—was ruined by another national asset—an insurance company is also a national asset—that one national institution was destroyed by the other." He concluded and breathed deeply. The bundled-up pig's head was swimming in oil when it asked: "Have you finished, Herr Birkmeier?" He had finished.

No, he hadn't finished—not quite! For Mondschein had a few little questions to ask—immaterial questions, questions for the sake of questioning. His voice was all geniality, and there arose between him and Birkmeier a sort of gruff intimacy. I could see the spongy man's brain work. And then at last his forefinger stabbed crookedly at the full-beard—a forefinger bent sideways, a corkscrew uncorking the bottle of argument. The trap was crude, but Birkmeier was caught before the red skeleton could intervene. It was nothing of consequence—it was a harmless bit of information which Mondschein had requested of Birkmeier. He asked if it were not considered ethical to deposit a paid-up policy for a loan. A paid-up policy, after all, was legal property of the holder. Well, then, was Birkmeier of the opinion that the act of procuring credit on one's own property was criminal? Birkmeier answered in the negative. Then, the other half of the transaction was the criminal one? Birkmeier, without hesitation, replied in the affirmative. And Mondschein said drily: "The other half consists of mortgaging a timber tract which was paid for in cash." And in a mild voice, as one talks to a nervous inmate of an institution for the feeble-minded: "Do you know what a liability is?" Birkmeier replied a little too hastily, and gave the wrong answer. But Mondschein was all kindness, all solicitude when he put the nonsensical question: "Perhaps you know what a library is, Herr Birkmeier?" People laughed. Yes, Birkmeier cut a sorry figure. His assurance, even his elegance, were gone; his suit did not seem to fit him any more. The prosecuting attorney came to his rescue by objecting. Mondschein said, in an undertone, but audibly: "What of it?" and again to Birkmeier, all benevolence: "And now, four more little questions . . ."

But Birkmeier had found himself at last. He turned to the bundle on the judge's chair and trumpeted: "If Your Honor please, I beg that the questions of the defense be put to me ex presidio. I refuse to answer a Jew!" This created a small sensation, and the bundle declared in a weak voice that he would hold the witness in contempt of court. Only when the assistant judge to the left, the one with the bald pate—he had been asleep—awoke with a start and whispered something close to his ear, did he correct himself: Should this occur once more, he would demand a waiver of immunity. But now the other assistant judge came to life and had something to whisper, and then the bundle, irritated and losing his politeness somewhat, said: "By the way—that is an error. You, as district delegate, have no claim to immunity. Who gives you a right to call yourself a representative of the people?"

There was considerable disturbance in the room. People talked and argued. The skeleton stepped up to the bundle and they held a whispered consultation. Mondschein, in the meantime, wrote unceasingly on the edge of a newspaper. Then, he rose and spoke into the sudden hush: "I cede my right of questioning the witness in person. Instead, I beg of the honorable Court"—his hand was a spoon—"to put the following questions to the witness." He read deliberately from the edge of the newspaper: "First: Is it true that the witness, after the collapse of the Abel Works, purchased through a dummy, his cousin, the retired Major-general Viktor Schostelka von Schlachtenstieg, two of the Abel factories, one, the establishment Deliciosa, in Czernowitz, and the other, Meyer Borscht Asessohn, in Nagykanisza? Second: Is it true that he made these sales while still manager of the Abel Works with power of attorney, therefore selling them to himself—Your Honor, did he sell the factories to himself? Third: Is it true . . ." What followed was unfortunately lost in shouts. ". . . Honor the forged notes of his son, Reinhard," I heard. By now, the whole room was on its feet and shouting. The prosecuting attorney roared an objection. Doctor Mondschein, roaring—yet inaudible—put his questions into the record. ". . . Smuggling cocaine, no doubt in the spirit of patriotism, because . . ." This scrap I heard. The presiding judge roared and withdrew the floor from Mondschein. And Mondschein, for the second time, entered a plea of nullity. Also, Birkmeier roared. But the judge dismissed the witness and, roaring, ordered a recess. They quieted down. The incident had not lasted a minute.

Only Birkmeier kept on roaring, and when the judges and the prosecuting attorney had left the court-room, roared still louder. He had turned toward the eagerly listening spectators and asserted that he knew where to get his rights—even in this Jewish Republic. All these alien races ought to emigrate to Palestine—that's where they belonged. And then he, he himself, would lay the cornerstone of a German International Fund, so that, at the mutual expense of all civilized nations—"even the French!" he exclaimed, in a burst of tolerance—a wall could be built around Palestine. "Patrolled by sharpshooters," he shouted, and his eyes glowed prophetically, "so that in case one of them tries to sneak away—bang! he gets a bullet!" The attendant took him placatingly by the arm and said: "Herr Birkmeier—" but Birkmeier left the court-room alone, his head proudly erect. Just as the door closed behind him, Klein's lawyer became visible. At last, the cipher had found his voice. The little man quivered. He was a Jew, he said, and he was a lawyer and a German and a Zionist, and he had been sworn. No one really listened to him. In the rear of the hall, De Letter was eating cheese sandwiches. Then, the Court returned, and the bundle pronounced a warning to Doctor Mondschein and a postponement of the trial until the afternoon. De Letter was still eating cheese sandwiches when he left with the others.

Of that afternoon and of the following day, I have not the slightest recollection. This much was certain, however: that from the flock of witnesses passing before the bar—Fenichel, Warre, Bostensohn, Ducrède, two customs-house officers, two prostitutes, seven duped aristocrats, three lawyers—nothing good was to be expected. Our boat lay fast between reefs, and all of Mondschein's tricks proved of no avail against the opinion of the auditing expert, a white-haired chatterer, Herr Friedrich by name, who, always on the qui vive, always on the defensive for irony, always hurt in his vanity, shrewd and narrow-minded, brought to light all our subterfuges and coups—like a hunting-dog which, instead of a brain, has only a nose. Every stroke of business became a crime. There were periodic allowances entered for expenses—he talked about it for three-quarters of an hour, saying these items should, by rights and in all honesty, have been entered under salaries. Merchandise had been appraised too low or too high or too hastily. And the increase of capitalization! He treated it as a case of murder, rape or incest. He treated it as though it had been perpetrated for the sole reason that he might unmask it and explain it at length to the court. He no longer referred to the increase of capitalization; he talked, righteous and narrow-minded, of business morals. Then, he talked solely of morals. He talked for three hours and a half. Even the prosecuting attorney and the bundle fell asleep.

No, Doctor Mondschein had nothing to say. When we left the court-room on the second afternoon, he turned to me: "Looks bad, my friend!" I shrugged my shoulders. He seized my arm, and said: "Man! What's the matter with you? Don't give up the ship!" I had not given up. Only—they were not trying my case. I had been fighting—and now, suddenly, nothing seemed stranger to me than the fact that I had fought. Acquisition of money, playing the cavalier, automobiles—at this moment, I was already many years and many thousands of miles away from it all. I still remember that in the midst of Bostensohn's testimony, when they were all frightfully indignant about some petty fraud—that I suddenly looked straight through the black gown of the presiding judge and saw the bare wall of the court-room behind him. This wall was crudely calcimined, like the wall of the dysentery hospital in Valakovsk—were not the shrapnel whining in the night air? No, all this did not concern me. And now it was Mondschein who shrugged his shoulders, as the guard led me back to my cell.

And then came the third day of the trial. It began with the cross-examination of Emmerich Farkas—it did not excite nor did it rouse me; but I will have to tell about it, on account of its consequences. The newspaperman had not been subpœnaed either by the prosecution or by the defense. After all the witnesses had been heard, he had voluntarily offered his testimony in a letter to the presiding judge, a letter promising sensational revelations and appearing simultaneously under a glaring headline in *Truth.* In order to understand this gesture on his part, it must be said that *Truth* was on the downward slump. A socialistic paper—Farkas had turned Monarchist—had gained knowledge of one of his little blackmailing feats, and had made it public. The Farkas advertising manager was arrested, and all the other papers bitterly denounced his practice of soliciting advertising by blackmail—probably to prove that their own hands were clean. In itself, this was an insignificant, almost ridiculous incident, and yet, from that time, Farkas heard it reverberate in every corner of his office; and what was worse: in two weeks, the circulation dropped twenty thousand. In short, *Truth* needed desperately, so as to get on its feet again, a sensational news-story, and that was the one and only reason of Farkas's meddling in the trial of Samuel Klein et al. His flaming headlines accusing Klein and myself of murder, on the strength of a reporter's puerile disclosures, had proven unsuccessful. So he disregarded his own person and offered—knowing full well that he would be heard—his testimony.

This testimony of Emmerich Farkas was brief and dramatic. He stepped up to the bar and bellowed his name and occupation. The presiding judge asked him to curb his voice. Then, he asked him what he had to tell. Farkas pulled a familiar copy of *Truth* out of his pocket and, in a resonant voice, started to read that same old article. The judge wanted to know the reason for this. Farkas said that his testimony was based on this article. The judge took the paper out of his hand and declared that he personally would read the article. He did so. When Hofrat Meier was mentioned for the second time, the prosecuting attorney rose and indicted Farkas for defaming a public official. The judge read on, and when he came to the part where Klein and myself were accused of murder, or at least of being accessories to the crime, Mondschein heaved himself out of his seat and announced that he would take action for libel. Even the cipher did likewise for Klein. Now, indeed, Farkas was caught in the wheels of the law. He commenced to gesticulate. That wasn't all, he declared, and looked about him. (De Letter was eating sausages. Some one in the audience handed Doctor Mondschein a piece of paper, and at once the lawyer began to cover the edge of a newspaper with hurried notes.) That wasn't all, Farkas repeated. "No, indeed, that isn't all!" Mondschein interrupted, and asked: "Is it true, Herr Farkas, that you have been previously convicted?" "No!"

shouted Farkas. Mondschein said, with some warmth: "You see, I had your police record sent on to me from Budapest!" He handed a list to the bundle. "I am not sure if this is complete. Nevertheless, there are noted twenty-four convictions. Eleven jail sentences up to six months: three for libel, one for theft, two for fraud and five for blackmail." No, there was no doubt: Farkas was caught in the wheels of the law. His exit was pitiful.

This was at half-past-ten. At one o'clock, an article appeared in *Truth.* But before this, there was still the cross-examination of Blanka Klein; the cipher, at this late date, had subpœnaed her as a witness for the defense, because the auditing expert had insisted that a certain deal in rubber-goods with Rumania should be charged against Klein—some one had been defrauded, and had sent in a complaint. When Klein's lawyer, the day before, had demanded that Blanka be called as a witness, his client had shown an alarm, an uneasiness apparent to all—the more surprising as he had, until now, followed the course of the trial with complete apathy. He rose abruptly and mutely raised his hand toward the lisping cipher. But already the consent had been given and a summons sent out for Blanka.

There she was—an elegant lady in black. Slender, proudly erect, she calmly stepped up to the bar. Fräulein Klein? Yes, that was her name. To be exact: that was her name as yet. She was engaged to be married. To the vice president of the Association of Trotting Races, a man with an old aristocratic name. Klein sat on his bench, next to the guard, supporting his elbows on his knees, his chin cupped in his hands. Thus he sat and looked steadily out of blank eyes at the slender, black lady who stood—turned away from him—before the judges. Blanka's testimony was as emphatic as it was reserved. She knew little about business. "You will understand that," she said, and smiled faintly at the prosecuting attorney—his name was von Richthofen, and it seemed to me as if she had been acquainted with him socially. "You will understand," she said, drawling her words a little, "that one is exposed to every milieu. In Rome, one does as the Romans do. If one is thrown among negroes, well—one carries on a conversation with negroes. It is ennuyant, but what can one do? And if one is among—among money-makers—how can I explain? One's fingertips are apt to become —soiled. But the use of a little eau de cologne—and after all, one always remains what one is . . . I don't know if I make myself clear," she said, with a slight Austrian and aristocratic accent.

Yes, she had made herself clear. The prosecuting attorney raised himself out of his chair a little and bowed. The bundle seemed to have shrunk and showed—courteously smiling—two rows of cannibalistic teeth.There was an atmosphere of well-bred cordiality around the three. But Samuel Klein on his bench seemed to have become still more insignificant. The thin wilderness of his red beard covered his twitching fingers, and his burnt-out eyes were a well of mourning. Job must have mourned like that, motionless and without sound.

The judge seemed to recall his duty. He said: "The witness, then, knows of nothing?" Astonishment and suppressed impatience vibrated in Blanka's voice as she answered: "Nothing!" The presiding judge: "Have the gentlemen any questions?" The prosecuting attorney—all cavalier—answered in the negative. The cipher disappeared behind the table. But Doctor Mondschein—although it did not concern him—rose spongily and, the perfect man of the world, said: "Madam surely recalls from the personal conferences—personal, I say, because Herr Oppenheim has testified—Madam must surely recall at least the one fact"—his voice suddenly lost its suavity and he said drily: "—that the merchandise smuggled by you and Herr Oppenheim into Rumania, the rubber preventives—" He did not get any further. The prosecuting attorney and the bundle, judging from the way in which they jumped out of their chairs and crowed, were old members of the dueling Color Students. Blanka flew around and faced Mondschein. With her left hand, she threw back her veil, so that the flaming hate of her black eyes could be seen glaring out of her white face. "What do you want to know?" she said, brusque and strident, and propped her right hand on her hip. The bundle tried to placate her. He spoke soothing words, and it was not difficult to feel pity for her when she, composing herself, but with tears of rage in her magnificent eyes, turned to him and the prosecutor and said: "That is no way to act! A lady is not accustomed to having every—every premier venu—" The bundle raised himself slightly and expressed his sympathy. But Mondschein, Mondschein did not let go. His voice fell into a broad sing-song, as he said: "Regarding these various rubber goods—I am not referring to the others now, but, if you wish, only to the nipples of the infant bottles—" No, he did not get any further. Something burst forth from Blanka. With her left hand, she struck her chest a resounding slap; then, she pointed accusingly at her spongy opponent; she slapped her thigh and a rough, hoarse voice, a great-grandmother-ghetto voice, burst forth from her and grated from between her teeth. "Dirty lie!" she grated. "I didn't make a kreutzer on those preventives. Oppenheim? Oppenheim! Can't scare me with Oppenheim! Let him come! Let him tell me to my face! I don't even know him! I don't know any of these people! And him—the defendant there—I'd be better off if I had never known him!" Tears ran down her cheeks. She collected herself. She let the veil fall before her face. She quieted down. She turned to the judge and said feebly, in a very thin, a very high-pitched voice: "May I go now?" She was excused.

And then Samuel Klein rose from his bench and went toward her. With heavy, dragging feet, as though he had forgotten how to walk, he went toward his daughter and said—the first words he had uttered in a century—said, in a spectral voice: "Blanka, my child!" She started, but she refused to look at him. And then he said something, seemingly in Hebrew. And it was probably a blessing—the way he raised his protecting hands above her head.

The door to the witness-room opened and a very tall, very slender man with gray at his temples appeared, made the least bit of a bow to the Court, and offered Blanka Klein his arm. The two disappeared. Samuel Klein, heavy-footed, stoop-shouldered—red bristles on his chin—slowly turned in a circle. Once. And once again. Then, the guard supported him by the elbow and led him back to the bench.

At twelve o'clock came the recess for lunch. When I was being led back to the court-room at half-past-one, a queue of sensation-seekers, four rows deep, was waiting—eighty or a hundred people—in the corridor, before the main entrance to the court-room, which had not yet been opened. I had to pass them, in order to reach the little side-door leading to the bar. Directly I turned the corner of the corridor under the escort of the guard and saw their backs, I felt that a change had come over them since the forenoon: an uneasiness, a suppressed excitement. It was strange, therefore, that no one noticed me until I had nearly passed through the crowd. From behind a newspaper—they all had newspapers; I noticed that only now—a pointing finger stabbed toward my face. A voice screeched: "There he is!" I saw only the opened jaws and bristling cat's whiskers above it. "He!" I heard. And three, ten, twenty voices, in confusion. "Abel!" I heard, and finally, shrill and strident: "He killed Abel!" I stopped. Some one struck me in the face with a crumpled newspaper. The guard quickly jerked me along and pushed me into the sanctuary of the little door.

Five minutes later, I learned that an extra edition of

Truth had come out and, citing apparently conclusive proofs, asserted: Samuel Klein and I had been acquainted with Ruben Feuerbach, the accused murderer, for decades. Moreover, this Ruben Feuerbach was probably an illegitimate child of the murdered Abel. Even if this were not proven, rumor had it that way—a rumor, the paper said, "to which the discriminating expert pays more attention than to the muddled protestations of an undutiful mother." Samuel Klein and I had "launched against Abel" this young Feuerbach, a homosexual cocaine-user, and with his help had forced our way by night into Abel's apartment—a proceeding we were only too capable of, for had we not, six months ago, "launched" Ruben's sister, Mirjam Feuerbach, against Farkas, in order to gain possession of certain journalistic secrets? Oh, yes—we had forced our way by night into Abel's apartment! And there, Klein had said: "The Abel concern is on the verge of bankruptcy. We'll all go to jail! There is only one way out: you, the president, must allow yourself to be placed under guardianship, on account of certain signs of senility, and give us the management of your fortune. Then, we will blame you for the irregularities—you can't be held responsible, and we are saved!" Abel had peremptorily refused to enter into this criminal conspiracy. "Never!" he had said. And then Samuel Klein, "with an evil look"—*Truth* averred—had commanded me to put Ruben Feuerbach, who was already under the benumbing influence of cocaine—had he not left a certain dive, after a cocaine orgy, with Abel and two other men, no doubt Klein and myself?—out of the way, with an extra dose of the poison. I had done so, and had placed the unconscious boy in the armchair, where he had been found at the time of the discovery of the murder and—a well-known pathological symptom, often found in habitual cocaine-users—had declared himself to be the principal actor in a scene that was only stamped hazily on his befogged memory. This is how it came about that he had said: "I! I did it!"

But the murder had actually been carried out thus, according to the report: Klein had answered Abel's refusal to submit to a guardianship with the threat: "Well, we will find another way!" And then, Klein and myself—one of us, I, being a very powerful man—had committed the murder, had undressed the corpse and put it to bed, had washed up the blood and left—locking the unconscious boy, on whom we had decided to throw all suspicion, in the apartment. And if all this were not sufficient proof—the fact that we, after the manner of hardened criminals, had appeared the following morning to witness the discovery of the crime, should be conclusive. Our behavior at the time, our sudden flight—all this was on record, sworn testimony. "We ask," concluded the sensational invective in *Truth,* "we ask the prosecuting attorney: when is he going to put an end to this unparalleled scandal? When is he going to indict the real murderers?"

The trial opened half an hour later than usual; the Court was in conference. Then, the bundle rose and declared that the trial against Samuel Klein et al. had been postponed and the case returned to the examining magistrate; the prosecuting attorney would no doubt wish to change the nature of the indictment. He would do so immediately, said the prosecutor. He would ask for a three days' postponement of the trial, as required by law; and then he would take action. In the meantime, he would have Johannes Abel's body exhumed. "To-morrow morning," said the prosecutor, "Ruben Feuerbach and the two defendants here will be confronted with the remains of the murdered man." Mondschein asked: "Why?" The prosecutor declared: "The records of the post-mortem examination do not specify whether the blows that killed Abel could have been struck by a comparatively weak person. That will have to be ascertained." Mondschein asked: "What has that to do with the case against the two defendants here?" "They are under suspicion of murder," said the prosecutor. Mondschein insisted: "But confronting them with the corpse—" "That is my prerogative. I insist upon it. I beg the Court to decide," answered the skeleton. The defense subsided. Two minutes later, I found myself in the corridor, among faces, faces, screaming faces, among bodies closing in on me, among newspapers that went from hand to hand. Was that De Letter? I saw cat's whiskers above open jaws. It was a wall, a spitting wall. Six guards opened a path. And two minutes later, I was in my cell.

THE following morning—it was a late summer day, stuffy, the sky very blue—they brought us to the institution of forensic medicine. Klein, Ruben, and myself. When I climbed into the prison ambulance, with its two stretchers and three seats on a wooden cross-bench, where I had my place between a guard and a male nurse, I saw Samuel Klein lying on one of the stretchers. He was fully dressed and lay on his back without cover or pillow, flat, motionless, as if he were lying in a casket, his vacant gaze fixed unwaveringly on a spot in the shaking top of the vehicle. On the other stretcher lay Ruben Feuerbach, apparently also dressed, but wrapped in blankets, so that only half of his pale face could be seen. His eyes were closed and it seemed to me as though his body were jerking convulsively. "That's the cure!" said the nurse. "He is taking the cure for the opium, or whatever he was using. The head surgeon didn't want him to come at all." He bent forward, and his huge hand groped gently beneath the cover. "Well?" he asked. But Ruben did not move.

The silent ride seemed interminable—it must have been around twelve o'clock when we arrived. Obviously, the morning papers had spread the news of the new turn in the Abel trial and of our enforced visit to the institution. When I stepped out of the ambulance, there was a crowd of at least sixty, some working-men and women, but mostly half-grown boys, who started to whistle shrilly when they saw us. The air was oppressive. Samuel Klein had arisen from the stretcher and I turned and assisted him out of the wagon, and now he stood, drooping, on the sunny sidewalk. But Ruben Feuerbach remained on the stretcher and had to be carried. I saw that he was shivering uncontrollably. We went through an iron gate, past the rambling mortuary of the huge hospital and past the gaping entrance of a chapel, completely draped in black cloth; we climbed up one staircase and down another—and found ourselves in a room which was called "Cellar VIII." It received its light from above through thick, green glass disks, and along the walls there were a dozen elevated, gray stone slabs. On the fourth of these slabs lay a lonely form, completely wrapped in a gray horse-blanket with rusty stains—probably crushed by wheels, waiting for identification or a nameless grave. On the sixth of these couches lay a wee bundle—so tiny that one's heart ached. The next slabs had been cleaned with a few splashes of water (some empty pails were standing in a corner) ready to receive new sleepers. Only the last, far back against the wall, bore a silent figure. At the foot of the slab, gazing at the body, stood a broad-shouldered boy in his coarse Sunday clothes; we crossed the room so quickly that I could not see his face, but peculiarly enough, I noticed a ridiculously heavy watch-chain spanning his vest. But already we were hastening along a narrow corridor, and found ourselves at last in a sort of ante-room, made up as a private office. Through a swinging glass-door with frosted panes we could see at intervals, for the fraction of a second, a narrow dissecting-room, lighted by a glaring electric arc-light. “They are to wait in here,” said some sort of an official, and so the two stretcher-bearers placed Ruben against the rear wall of the room, almost in darkness. The light came in diagonally from an air-shaft; the filthy, green skylight had been lifted, so that one could see a small strip of the hospital courtyard and, beyond chimneys, a ragged corner of incredibly blue sky. As for Klein and myself, we stood against the side wall, ten paces from Ruben’s stretcher, in the path of light from the open skylight, diagonally opposite the frosted glass door of the dissecting-room, where the guard stood peeping through a crack and listening. Ruben’s nurse had recognized an old acquaintance in one of the attendants, or corpse-washers—a faceless man with bare arms, a wrestler’s arms—and had left the room with him. It must be said here that this room had an odor not exactly of medicine, but rather of dampness and of fresh meat, such as one finds in the cellar of a slaughter-house—an odor of something that had still been alive a short while ago, although the four or five hundred human tongues, torn out of four or five hundred human throats, yellow and cracked or pink or pale, arranged in callously glittering glass jars, in rows, in regiments against the lengthwise wall, had been silenced, as one could gather from the labels, for ten, for twenty and for thirty years.

Ruben lay there with closed eyes; I do not know if he was asleep or not at the time. Klein was leaning against the wall next to me, saying not a word, and it seemed as though he were fighting against a lethargy, somehow closing in on one from the heavy atmosphere, despite the rousing, scourging, bestially-menacing odor. Two sounds were alive in the room: the ticking of a cheap watch, probably belonging to the guard who stood listening at the door; and from behind this door, from the dissecting-room, the buzzing cadences of a subdued voice, reading something aloud, listlessly rolling along in a dull monotone. I listened for minutes before I realized that this prolix meaninglessness was the report of the first post-mortem examination of Abel. "—Gaping from the right lower edge of the orbit across the rim of the mandible, on the level with the right canine, cutting through the fascia colli lateralis into the body of the sternocleidomastoideus muscle, and though without injuring the carotid artery," I heard. The voice seemed to hover in solitude between the dripping cellar walls; and yet I felt, I smelled people in that room—many people, pressed around a blindingly lighted table on which lay a Thing, in a long wooden box—a Thing, wrapped in a brown, stained horse-blanket.

Just then, I looked up at the skylight—I had the feeling that some one above were staring down at us. And I actually thought I detected the shadow of a head quickly jerked back. Some one curious to see the performance, I thought. I gazed at the strip of courtyard and the sky above it; a tiny, ragged piece of sky, a jagged and torn clipping, but so blue, so eloquent of freedom, so maddeningly airy, ethereal and beckoning, that I suddenly found it impossible to breathe in this tomb. Once more, something within me raised its head and asked: "Why are you standing here? What have you to do with all this? You are a thousand miles away from what is happening here. They are sitting in judgment on some one other than the one who committed the crime. Therefore, no justice is just." In the other room, the voice droned: ". . . Even this might not have resulted in lethal termination, had not the infiltration of the connective tissue . . ." The guard, his back toward me, bent attentively at the door crack; Ruben lay there with closed eyes; Samuel Klein, too, had closed his eyes; behind the evil, glittering jars, five hundred ghosts stuck out their tongues at me. Noiselessly, I opened the door leading into the cavern of the narrow corridor; noiselessly, I closed it behind me and glided back into the cellar with its twelve stone couches.

The one on Number Twelve, near the rear wall, had been removed in the meanwhile; the little fellow with the ridiculous watch-chain had probably been his son, and no doubt had identified him. It was very quiet in here. One thing I noticed: the entrance to the iron stairway over which we had come was barred. And simultaneously, I saw some one standing and listening through the filthy, green skylight. For a full minute, I did not move. "Pst!" said the listener. I was silent. "Pst!" he said. I could not see him; I saw only a weird, noon-shortened shadow; a shadow-monster on the greenish, frosted glass. I was silent. "Hey, you!" he said. "What do you want?" I asked. Up there, he whispered: "How is he? How is the youngster?" I said: "Open the gate from the outside, or break the window!" He whispered: "How is Ruben Feuerbach?" I said: "Open up, man!" He whispered: "Shhh! Nix! Keep quiet! Somebody's coming!" The shadow, on enormous soles, tiptoed away across the glass. Then, it unexpectedly returned. "Pst!" he said. I asked: "Yes?" He whispered: "It was nothing. They are back there in the liver room." "Where?" "Where they have the liver collection." And then, I saw the shadow bend down, and through the crack of a slightly open skylight dived an arm. In the broad paw rested a tiny package. A whisper: "Cigarettes! Give them to the boy." I said: "Open up! Let me out of here!" And he whispered: "It won't do! You'd be nabbed in no time. The whole yard is full of dicks." And after a pause, just above a whisper, "Give the boy the package!" I took it and asked: "From whom?" "None of your damned business!" he whispered. I started to go away, when I heard him again: "Hey, you!" And after a pause, very faintly: "Did they dig him up yet?" I heard footsteps next door; I thrust the cigarette box into my pocket and stepped back into the niche of the door leading into the corridor. I did not answer. And then the voice once more came through the air-shaft, but now it trembled so horribly that it was barely audible—a toneless, choking gargle: "Hey, you! The old man—has the old man—his face yet?"

But just then—to the left—the door opened and the shadow jerked away from the skylight. In came Ruben's nurse, followed by the corpse-washer with the athletic arms, who was pushing before him a table on rollers. This table was covered with livers, a reddish brown heap, glistening wet, almost alive and quivering like jelly at every movement. This rolling table, which left a revolting cadaver-stench behind it, the giant shoved across the room and out. I stepped up to the nurse and asked: "Is there a toilet here?" He roared at me: "Get back to the other room!" And so I stumbled back to Klein and Ruben.

The scene had changed. In the center of the room stood Klein, his eyes riveted on the door of the dissecting-room, something about him expressive of readiness for the worst. Ruben was standing there, too—he had probably been ordered up from his stretcher. He stood next to Klein, slightly swaying, but somehow soldierly and erect; his head was thrown back and he looked up through the skylight and out, out into space. Was not the shadow of a head pulled back, just then? The man up there, the man with the arm and the cigarette box, was probably snooping around the building. The sky was so indescribably blue that one felt a tug at one's heart. Behind me, the guard clattered into the room, cursing: he had been looking for me. "If you leave the room again, I'll put a bracelet around your ankles!" he said, in a snarling whisper. Apparently next door, something had come to an end. We could hear them moving about. On the stone floor squeaked a rolling table; feet shuffled; subdued voices babbled confusedly. Then, the door opened and Klein's lawyer and Doctor Mondschein entered. The spongy man dried his neck with a kerchief and said: "Close!" He held the lisping cipher by the arm: the little man had become violently ill and had to be refreshed. But he could not drink the water the nurse offered him. "Everything tastes of it!" he said, faintly. Mondschein gazed through the skylight. "The sun is gone. You'll soon feel better, now!" he said, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. And to us: "Now, be careful! Now, you must go in!" Suddenly, it was so hot in the room that it was difficult to breathe.

Next door, the preparations went on, apparently for the second post-mortem examination. A faucet hissed, instruments clinked and rattled, and through the door, now constantly swinging back and forth—as more and more of the crowd in there, including the two assistant judges and the court stenographer, retreated into our room—for minutes at a time we could see the white smocks of the two prosectors, and a Herculean man, with a snow-white full-beard, washing his hands. "The professor!" said the nurse at my side. The athlete was now visible, too; he was busy at the center table. And—was this part of what was to come, or was it accidental?—at that moment, the professor opened the door and fastened it to the wall. He loomed gigantic in the doorway and called back, laughingly, into the dissecting-room: "We'll be ready in a minute, now, Your Honor!" Yes, there—revealed through the open door—beside the two white smocks stood two men in everyday clothes: the presiding judge and, leaning close to him against the rear wall, the bony prosecutor. (Only now, without his robe, one noticed how extraordinarily tall and thin this man really was.) And then, there was still the athlete working in there. He pulled the spotted blanket off the table. There stood a coffin of unplaned planks, moldy and earth-stained. The athlete tried to extract the nails with a pair of pliers, but it was slow work. The professor called over: "Break it open!" And so the giant forced a chisel under the lid of the coffin.

He could not lift the lid in one piece, for the wood was already decayed. Only a piece flew out, and another and still another; splinters of rotten wood sailed through the room. Finally, the upper end lay open. From where we stood, we saw only a green-brown-yellowish cloth, a shroud that might once have been white. This shroud—"Open!" the professor had said—the faceless giant took between two fingers of his left hand. He raised it, stabbed a short knife into it and, following the edge of the coffin, he cut roughly but carefully into the cloth. And then a cloud of escaping stench must have assailed the two court functionaries in there—it had not as yet invaded our room—for the judge and prosecutor reeled backwards against the wall, as though something invisible had hurled itself against their chests. For a moment they stood their ground; then, with hasty steps, they came almost leaping into our room, where Klein, Ruben and I stood, side by side, like good soldiers. They stumbled through our midst, all dignity thrown aside, and seated themselves far in the rear, to the left, on the stretcher which Ruben had vacated. The boy stood, swaying slightly, with wide-open eyes that saw nothing of what was going on.

The next moments brought a chaotic simultaneity of multitudinous happenings—at least, I, in recalling it, cannot unfold a continuity: I can only see pictures, as one sees them during flashes of lightning. First of all: a heavy thunderstorm had actually broken loose outside—one of those devastating late-summer storms which occurred three or four times that year. The jagged bit of sky had become a leaden gray, and the room so dark that we could not distinguish each other's faces. Only in the dissecting-room was the light burning. Hail clattered on the skylights. Wind whipped sheets of rain across the glass; a torrent poured through the open window and deluged the eighteen or twenty persons huddled together in the room. We cowered to the left, in the rear. The clothes were sticking to our bodies. The professor and the two prosectors squeezed themselves into our midst. For, while there was only an air-shaft in this side room, in the dissecting-room there were twenty open windows on either side, and a chill wind drove through them waterfalls that splashed on the stone floor. Here and there, glass splintered.

At the first crash, the professor cried: "Close the air-shafts!" The two prosectors advanced into the downpour. Glass splintered—the frames stuck. At my side, teeth began to chatter. It was the lisping cipher. Had he not been squeezed between the two assistant judges, the reporters and the others, he would have fallen to the floor.

At the same time, the stench. A wave of stench, temporarily held down by the damp air, now came flooding into the room—an indescribable stench of indescribable horror. The teeth chattering ceased; the cipher had fainted. He sagged, in his wet clothes, and was held upright by the pressure of his neighbors; his head sank forward, but he did not fall. Inside, in the dissecting-room, on the flooded stone floor, beneath the glaring light, a solitary man, the athlete, stood beside the coffin, with legs spread apart. Apparently, he had finished his work, for he turned his faceless head toward us, toward the professor. And then, shrapnel was bursting and machine guns were hammering against the glass roof. The surgeon called over to him: "Off with the rag!"

At the same time—but only I saw it—on the glass roof, next to one of the open windows through which the rain poured, up there, in the splashing waters that fell from leaden-gray clouds—there lay a man, looking down through the opening. Only for a moment did I see his face; water enveloped his head and erased his features. So I saw only that it was a human face. And at the same time, in there, green and horribly bloated, a man—no, not a man! A bugaboo. A scarecrow, a gargoyle—but bloated to gigantic proportions—a horrible monstrosity, the bullet-head gaping from one black-green-yellow ear-bone to the other, spitting, spitting stench. . . .

And then—Ruben. As the rest of us, accusers, accused, guards and surgeons, were driven close together into the farthest corner of the room by the unutterable horror, Ruben took three or four short, stiff steps forward into the center of the room. He was not trembling any more. He stood rigid, unconscious of the rain which the wind still swept through the skylight. He gazed straight ahead—not into the dissecting-room, not at the wall of the dissecting-room—he gazed through the wall, it seemed to me. Some one at my side whispered: "His face!" I had seen that face once before, two hundred years ago, when I threw a burning lamp at some one. Ruben said: "Make me your heir, dear Father!" He lifted his hand toward the green specter in the coffin and said: "Father! Father! Father!" His face vanished—nothing remained of it but the eyes. Through the wall he stared, through the wall. And then, something seemed to snap in him, as though he could see what we others could not see; as though he saw the green monster in there still alive and breathing. "No!" he shouted, suddenly. "No, no! Not the candlestick! No! Don't hit him! Don't kill him! Open the door! Let me in! Stop your singing! Not the candlestick! The door!" His shouts ended in a shrill, long-drawn, high-pitched scream, as though something was happening in there; as though he saw something that we could not see. We stood pressed close together, while the rain swept over us—stood there with pale faces, and stared at the raving boy. Big tears rolled down his cheeks. With quivering lips, he whimpered, slowly: "Now—he—is—dead!" Silence enveloped him like a mourning veil. No, not one of us who stood there staring could explain the occurrence.

But this lasted perhaps no more than two minutes. Then, we pulled ourselves together; indeed, a hysterical animation came over us. The professor was the first to find his voice: "A phrenetic! Has he ever been psycho-analyzed?" And Doctor Mondschein: "What is the purpose of this farcical performance?" The nurse: "The chief didn't want him to—" The prosecutor: "It is my prerogative to bring the defendants—" Some one else: "Stop it! Wet to the skin! No one can endure this stench!" The professor: "What more do you want? I herewith certify that the boy over there could not possibly have struck the blow. I'm sorry to say that the police surgeon—" The prosecutor: "But it is my prerogative—" Doctor Mondschein suddenly roared: "If you have sadistic tendencies, go to a sanitarium!" That brought a moment's silence. The rain had stopped as abruptly as it had begun. It stank. Then, five persons shouted simultaneously. "Disciplinary proceedings—" began the prosecutor. Mondschein: "I move that—" The professor went over to the corpse, examined it, cut into it and resonantly dictated his findings. He was an honest and stubborn man, and finished everything, now that he had formed his opinion, with unexpected expedition. "I declare the Court herewith adjourned!" said the presiding judge. They hurried away.

But that was not the end, for Ruben would not leave. The room was almost empty—Ruben would not leave. Ruben would not turn. Smilingly, Ruben stood there, and said: "Father!" raising his hand toward the poor lump of clay. Klein stood at his side, heavy-footed and solemn, a mourner. He had folded his hands, and it seemed to me as though he were silently praying. Was he humming? There was a lofty, lamenting rhythm in this humming. "Father!" said Ruben to the lump of clay. I also stood at his side—now that I might leave this cellar-tomb, something held me there. Something exploded in me, but no song came from between my lips. Who screamed? Suddenly, the room was empty—only we three stood there. Who had struck the guard in the face? But there were too many of them bearing me down. From beneath them, lying on the wet stone floor, I saw Ruben's face. He was smiling peacefully, and lifted his hand to the lump of clay. Oh, no, you bastards! I won't go back into your cage! I heard a shrill voice. Was I screaming? A chain rattled at my ankles, but I still managed to throw my knee into the athlete's face. Was that the cabinet falling? Glass crashed—glass. On the stone floor, everywhere—five hundred torn-out human tongues were stuck out at me. And then, I was strapped to the stretcher. They carried me. In the courtyard of the hospital was a scanty grass plot. The blades were covered with raindrops, scintillating in all the colors of the rainbow beneath the once more flawless blue sky.

All this came to an end much more rapidly than was to be expected. They tried to follow the clues given in the last denunciation in *Truth*, but they did not succeed even in proving that Ruben was actually Abel's son. What they gathered from neighbors and the like was idle gossip. And Frau Feuerbach, the only one who might have spoken with authority, was not taken into consideration as a witness. To free her child from jail, she had made a hundred vain endeavors, had made a hundred pleas, had changed her testimony a hundred times—had said whatever she thought might be of help to Ruben. They did not even make notations of what she said, any more. "Just a fool!" said the little examining magistrate. Who else? No one knew what had become of Feuerbach. And Mirjam did not appear: just at that time—after an inflammatory speech at a meeting—she had vital reasons for not showing herself before the judiciary.

They sent Ruben Feuerbach to the psychopathic institution, and later he was dismissed. As to the Abel murder, "unknown criminals" were sought. Klein and I were never seriously involved: we had easily proven an alibi. But for the customs-house swindle, for fraud and for obtaining money under false pretenses, we were each sentenced to a year in prison, minus the five months we had been detained before the trial. I did not see Klein again at that time—I only heard that he had been dismissed after seven months.

As for me, the case was different. The trouble I had made at the post-mortem weighed against me. For that, I had to serve an additional five months in prison . . . my hair clipped, along with all the others . . . pasting paper bags, paper bags . . .

BOOK THREE

THE CRY

THE DOWNTRODDEN

SAMUEL KLEIN had been out of jail some two months (I still had three months to go) when Suvarov, or, to be correct, Müllerova, had occasion to recall a conversation that had occurred one night, many months before, when a bespectacled, high-shouldered young man had followed the two of them to their room. It came about in this manner: On July 13th, around six o'clock in the evening, when the beershops were empty, Jablonski, the Pole, walked into the little road-house, "The Shepherdess," arm in arm with Anton. Both were noisy and slightly intoxicated. They had slender bamboo canes, probably bought or filched from a peddler, and these they bent comically and perilously in their uncouth hands, or else they beat them rhythmically on the table until the inn-keeper, gigantic and scowling, entered on felt-slippered feet. "Wine! Young wine!" Anton cried. With a wink of his eye, the inn-keeper forced Jablonski into a far corner. "Are you crazy, man," he asked, "lugging that fellow out here?" Anton was looking sharply over at them, so Jablonski, for his benefit, grinned broadly while he said out of the corner of his mouth: "Shut your trap and listen!" The giant growled: "Badele gave me orders not to let him in." Jablonski nodded toward Anton, hissing softly: "I'm not a fool! Shut up, man! And keep your eyes open!" Anton rose and staggered toward them. "What does he want?" he asked. He reeled, but his eyes were watchful. Jablonski laughed: "Money! He won't give me any more credit!" Anton's eyes dulled once more. He put his hand into his pocket and said: "Here is money!" It was a large bill.

Then, silently, they drank two liters, saying only "Prost!" and again "Prost!" as they emptied their glasses. Then Jablonski leaned forward over the table and sang into Anton's face:

"Many red roses I've plucked in my day.
Many sweet maidens I've kissed on the way.
But that was long, long ago,
That was long, long ago."

And then they sang together: "Long, long ago! That was long, long ago!" Anton wept. He was drunk; there was no doubt of it. He laid his broad, red paw on the table and said, thickly: "No one's got a chance, when I'm there! When I get my hands on any one—he's through!" "Right you are!" said Jablonski, and "Prost!" But Anton wanted to be reassured: "Am I right?" "Right you are!" said Jablonski, and was wide awake. Then, Anton leaned forward and, now harmonizing, they sang into each other's faces:

"Many red roses I've plucked in my day . . ."

They drank in silence—so deeply were they affected. Then, Jablonski nudged the heavy man with his fist, and not any too gently, and said: "How about Gutjahr?" The other tried to get up, but could not. "Gutjahr . . . is no friend!" he said, thickly. "He is always saying: 'You won't get any more!' or, 'Go croak!' Is that friendship? You've heard him say . . ." Here he drew himself up and viciously mimicked Gutjahr's gentile voice: 'I do not know you!' Do you call that friendship? Or when he says: 'Be off with you, or I shall call a policeman!' " He drank deeply. "Is that friendship? Well? Am I right? Is that friendship, Polack?" He wanted to hear it twice. He was right, indeed.

Still, they drank. "Many sweet maidens I've kissed . . ." sang Jablonski. Then, after a pause, he said: "But now, you've got money!" He looked up and saw how the eyes of the drunken man were fighting sleep. "You know what I believe?" said Anton, slowly and with sudden, watchful venom. "I believe you're trying to pump me, Polack! Listen! You wouldn't be the first!" He put his red butcher-hand on Jablonski's neck, while the inn-keeper tiptoed closer from the rear. But then Anton had to scratch himself, and the bartender stepped back into the shadows; and Jablonski laughed until his white forelock fell into his eyes, so that he could not see his wine-glass. He said: "But now, you've got money again!" And Anton lifted himself on the edge of the table and roared: "Like hell I have! Here! He took that from the shock troop; that, from the Warsaw fellow. And that"—he lowered his voice and whispered, with a horrible, smug wink of his eye—"that, too, he took from Abel." The inkeeper in the rear moved. "What Warsaw fellow?" said Jablonski. But Anton bent forward and sang of red roses, and Jablonski joined in. "Warsaw fellow?" Jablonski repeated. But then he nodded understandingly and continued: "I know!" he said. "Our courier, our comrade, who brings the money from Warsaw." Anton laid his heavy hand on the table. His raw, fleshy fingers were like crouching beasts. ". . . Brings money from Warsaw!" he aped the other, and drank, and said: "You think the police got that? The papers where everything is written down—yes, those—pay, and they're yours! But money?" He laughed until he began to cough. Jablonski hit him with the flat of his hand at least twenty times between the shoulder-blades before he quieted down. "Not everything to the police—" the Pole said, idiotically, and then they laughed in unison; laughed a long time into each other's faces. It seemed as though Jablonski expected to hear a joke, when he asked: "The Warsaw fellow—?" And Anton raised his forefinger and whispered, as though revealing a funny secret: "Swims! In the river!" Suddenly, he grew taciturn. Was it the wine that suddenly got the better of him? He babbled thickly—hardly audible: "Can't—see—the face—then!" He said no more.

That was really all. For shortly thereafter, the gigantic inn-keeper lifted the unconscious drunk in his arms like a child, carried him into his bedroom and put him on a cot. In fifteen minutes, a committee meeting of the Class D group had been called, to be held in "The Shepherdess." Red Hawks were already patrolling the street when Suvarov arrived in a motor. The others were waiting. "No. 212, from Warsaw, is five days overdue," commenced Adlerova, and twitched. "That's cleared up now," said Suvarov, fishy-eyed, and silenced her with a movement of his icy hand. He was icier, still more reserved than usual, and somehow terrifying. The incident did not come inopportunely—"curry-combing," he called it—as it aided him in his endeavor to stir the Party into more violent action. He rose and, though the committee meetings were not usually ceremonious, asked for the floor. Then, he spoke. If he was really this Vorovsky, then Vorovsky's oratorial genius has a place in the history of the Russian Revolution. Who was there to gainsay him, when he declared that all patience had been exhausted and that a time had come for them when deeds—not words—counted! "We all," he said, "we all, comrades, have dedicated our lives to a cause. Our lives do not belong to us any more. It is our duty to guard our lives for the cause." He paused, then continued: "Comrade Badele has had this man Gutjahr on his list for more than a year now. I myself warned him at the time. Nothing has been done. Very well! You say you had no proof. But what now?" He struck the table with his open hand. "Now, you have the proof! I ask: What now? This is the third courier who has been waylaid. The first got away. The second was nearly killed. And now, the third—drowned!

Three couriers! Three times, this Gutjahr! Anton Horak? I say Horak does not count. He is a tool. We can use tools ourselves. But this Gutjahr! I ask: What now? This Gutjahr has stolen Party money and Party secrets, and has sold them to the police—and who knows for how long this has been going on? For the last time, I ask: What now?" He concluded in a stern voice, and his fish-eyes gazed from one to the other, as though he expected an answer. "What shall be done?" asked Strohbach, of the electric works. And three others inquired: "What shall be done?" And Adlerova demanded, with twitching lips: "What shall be done with Gutjahr?"

There was a pause. The gas lamp sang. Suvarov did not answer, but looked from one to the other; looked into a dozen faces. Then, with his colorless hand, he reached for a pencil—it was a long, yellow pencil, fastidiously sharpened, exactly as he preferred to use it; a bourgeois pencil, come to think of it. He reached for this pencil, held it horizontally in his fingers and—instead of answering—broke the pencil in two.

This silent act made a deep impression on all present. Adlerova twitched and it looked as though she were threatened with one of her attacks. The eyes of Müllerova, his secretary, glistened. The men from the trades unions, especially Strohbach, but also Kern from the transportation and Kandelka from the metal-workers, were inflamed and depressed at the same time. Four of them rose, retreated into a corner and held a whispered consultation. Two more followed them, and still another. Only one sat still: the gray-haired man with the combed pompadour. He was an old Party man and his rosy face gave no indication of the many days he had sat in jail for his principles. Something was fermenting in him, and it seemed that he were about to make a speech. Then, there was Berggrün, the editor of the

Party paper, obviously painfully ill at ease and very thoughtful; he drew pictures of guns on the rim of a newspaper. Only Badele was absolutely calm; the serious man looked worried, but he said nothing. Oh, yes—there was still Mirjam. She sat far in the rear, somewhat outside the circle of light, her chin cupped in her hand, her eyes closed and her cheeks flushed. One had to know her very well to realize how agitated she was.

However, the pause after the breaking of the pencil was not so long as it may appear here. It lasted probably no longer than two or two and a half minutes. Suvarov was still looking from one to the other, and Müllerova, who knew him well, saw that he was not satisfied with the result of his words. He looked down at his hands, and said, sharply: "I will have to make myself a little more clear. What you are doing here, comrades, is not making revolution. All this is child's play!" The head of the gray-haired man jerked up sharply, but the Russian repeated, still more emphatically: "Play! That is of little help to us in Moscow! We might say: This country is still asleep! Very well! Eventually, it will awaken. But you are of the Third Internationale! You have —what do you call it?—obligations! Therefore—" The gray man interrupted him: "But the Gutjahr case—" The cold hand cut through the sentence. Suvarov said: "Who is talking of the Gutjahr case? Gutjahr is a symptom. True, in politics, we must also combat the symptoms—probably the symptoms first of all. The Gutjahr case? I am speaking of the situation! After the World War, you had a little revolution. You drove away the Emperor. Did you drive him away? He left of his own accord! You shouted: 'Hurrah!'—that was your revolution. A promenade along the boulevard and —oh, well, also a few revolver shots. And then?" He clenched his pale fingers and rapped bonily on the table: "Do you prefer to be governed by the bourgeois, rather than by the

Emperor? It is immaterial to the proletarian *who* eats—he has nothing to eat. Republic? Comrades, the banks suck blood. Comrades, the employers do not hesitate to throw their workmen out on the streets. Comrades! The Courts? Justice? A working-man is shot by a member of the Swastika—the malefactor is acquitted. Three working-men throw stones—they get six months in jail. A member of the shock troops, a snot-nose, strangles a boy because he wants to join the Red Hawks. Instead of being sent to the penitentiary, he is sent to the psychopathic institution. Shall I go on? Two working-men were shot in Orth; who will wager that the guilty ones will not get off with a lenient sentence, as usual?" The gray-haired man grew excited. "Oh, no! Not this time!" he said. "According to the newspaper reports of the trial—" But Suvarov shouted him down and pointed dramatically into space. "Go there!" he shouted. "Go to the trial! It has been in progress three days. To-morrow, you will hear the verdict. If those murderers get more than a year, I am not what I am!" The gray-haired man slumped back in his seat and muttered dully: "Then, much blood will flow!" Now, the Russian had what he wanted. All of them, sitting or standing, were filled with deep indignation. Those from the unions were especially incensed. One of them cried: "We won't allow them to butcher our people any longer!" At this moment, Suvarov raised his hand—peremptorily, swiftly, conclusively. There was a breathless silence. Then, he suddenly shouted: "That is the Gutjahr case!" And, quietly: "That is why we must put an end to Gutjahr!"

There was silence again. Then, Badele said, gazing at the floor as though embarrassed: "You must understand, Comrade Suvarov—this is the first time that we—we have condemned a man to death!" The gray-haired man nodded eagerly. But Suvarov, who was now more than ever determined to test his power, did not heed them, and said drily:

"The question, therefore, is: How and Whom? Who will undertake it?" A long, painful silence ensued, while Suvarov, with rapidly blinking lids, looked from one to the other. Berggrün, the editor, rose suddenly and said: "I will have to be excused! I must be going! I have to attend to the make-up." The union representatives had likewise suddenly sobered. Again they rose, one after the other, and he from the gas-works said: "Not like that!" They glanced at each other, came to an understanding, went to the corner in the background and consulted. Then, they called: "Red Front, comrades!" and left. Only the gray man had remained seated. Suvarov turned to him and said ironically: "And you?" But the other's look silenced him.

There still remained, in addition to the gray man and Suvarov, Badele, Mirjam, Adlerova and, naturally, Müllerova. They did not look at each other, and all knew that Suvarov had just met with failure. Suvarov smiled ironically, and pondered. No, these people were not ripe for his plans. ("They must fall into liberty, as one falls into a river. To jump voluntarily—no, they are not ripe for that yet!" he later wrote to Moscow.) Still smiling, he radically changed his plan. They wish to fall, he thought; I must create opportunities to force them, if necessary. Now more than ever did the Gutjahr case gain importance with him. If there was anything that would cement these people together, it would be a common guilt. And still he smiled as he said airily, as though nothing had happened—as though there had not been an eternity between his last words and these: "Well—and who will take care of Gutjahr?" And again there was silence, and Müllerova said, in her beautiful voice: "What was the name of the young man who came to see us that time? At night, in our room?" Suvarov, with two fingers, tapped against his temple and said: "He!" And, Müllerova: "Klein! Isidore, I believe." Badele, a little startled, said: "Ignaz

Klein!" Suvarov added, conclusively: "He was willing to shoot!" To send this short-sighted and temperamental youth into the fray—that might fit well into his altered plan. ("I'll start little fires here and there, instead of one conflagration," he said to Müllerova, on their way home.) And therefore, he repeated now: "He is willing to shoot! Then, he shall shoot!"

But once more, he found unexpected opposition. It was Mirjam Feuerbach. She raised her face and said: "I know this Ignaz Klein. He couldn't kill a chicken without fainting." Suvarov remained unperturbed. "First of all, let some one bring him here," he said, and nodded to Müllerova, who at once left the room. He called after her: "Send the car." Only then did he turn to Mirjam, and replied: "Perhaps a chicken, but not a traitor!" "Those are only words!" said the gray man, without looking up. "A sad state of affairs, comrade, if those are only words to you!" said Suvarov, cuttingly; but just then Müllerova returned from the next room and put her hand placatingly on his arm. The gray man was aroused. "I was a friend of Lenin's, in Zürich, comrade, while you were still going to school!" he said to Suvarov, who stood, forceful and satanic, in the glare of the gas-light. Now, Mirjam came closer; only Adlerova remained in the shadows, and not much more than her eyes could be seen. "I spent ten years in jail!" said the gray man, and his voice shook a little.

Badele attempted to bridge the tension. "Comrade Suvarov will no doubt tell us why it must be this Klein," he said calmly, and Mirjam, standing erect and agitated in the light, added in an emphatic voice: "This Klein, even if he should shoot, will be arrested the very next moment and will make us look ridiculous!" Suvarov said, with a smile: "That doesn't matter!" "We have better ones!" said Mirjam. And Suvarov: "Fine! Then, why worry about him?" Mirjam flushed deeply, and Suvarov had the uneasy feeling of having said too much. She is a cat! he said to himself. She reads all my cards! he thought. But despite his anger, he still had the exhilaration of a gambler. At his ear, hardly audible, was the soft voice of Müllerova: "How beautiful she is now, Ivan Illitch!" But he had no time to pay attention to this. Mirjam said: "Comrade Suvarov, I demand that the task be given to some one else. If it *has* to be—but then, I am not the one to decide. That decision lies with you. You are our leader. But if it has to be, it must not be done by a dupe. It must be done by one of us!" Suvarov, the debater, trained to disable his opponent with the first thrust, said quickly, while the corners of his mouth twitched: "By you, for instance?" Mirjam paled, but she held her ground. Firmly, even if in a low voice, she said: "For instance, by me!" And now, when an undisguised smile curved Suvarov's lips, she said, stubbornly, angrily, haughtily: "Comrade Suvarov, I insist that this task be given to me!"

Dead silence. Only Adlerova's eyes gleamed in the darkness, and at the table the gray man nodded, nodded many times, without lifting his eyes. Suvarov seated himself and looked aged and thoughtful. "We cannot live our own life!" he said, after a while, in a changed voice; and then, looking the girl full in the face: "Do you know, sister, what you are being saved for?" He pondered: they are, after all, just like children, whether young or gray-haired. Mirjam said, stubbornly: "Then, I insist that we draw lots!" "Yes, draw lots!" repeated the gray man, with sudden animation. "In Zürich—" he said, and stopped abruptly. They are like children! thought Suvarov. He collected himself once more, and smiled. This turn of affairs fitted well into his plans. He will chain, cement them together! "We will draw lots!" he said, calmly. "I, you, all of us!" And, turning to Mirjam, almost jovially: "Are you satisfied, now?" Outside, some one rapped on the window in the Morse code. "Comrade Isidore Klein is coming," Suvarov said, without leaving his chair.

"Ignaz Klein!" corrected Badele, solemnly. No one said a word until the klaxon of a motor barked five short signals. "Comrade Klein is here!" said Suvarov. Then, the door opened.

Of the scene that followed, there is not much to tell. If Suvarov at that time consented to the drawing of lots; if he, without seeking to evade, included himself; if he remained calm while the others became deeply agitated—only Müllerova and Badele were, for different reasons, untouched by the excitement, while Adlerova shook as though in a slight fit, the gray man walked up and down the room and Mirjam, flushed and breathing heavily, controlled her nerves as one controls a pack of hounds on a strong leash—if, as I say, Suvarov remained calm, it was easy to understand: not for a moment had he considered allowing the drawing of the lots to be fair and equal. He was experienced in drawing lots. That no one but Ignaz should settle this little affair with Gutjahr was for him a settled fact. The preliminaries? The farce? "Curry-combing," he called it. There could be no doubt at all that he was Ivan Illich Vorovsky.

The door opened, and in stepped Ignaz Klein. During the first few moments after his arrival, he was less excited than the others. For when Jablonski and a youth had called for him with a motor at the coffee-house, where he could always be found between five and seven, playing chess—when he had seen Jablonski appear in the doorway, in a flash, intuitively, he had known why they had come for him. Never before had he been sent for. Of the conversation with Suvarov, he remembered every word, as though it had happened yesterday. He rose, took his hat and went with Jablonski. The six people in the room greeted him with silent handshakes. Oh, he was not without clear-sighted bitterness at the moment. The way Suvarov talked to him, with so much oratorical effort, reminded him of the officers during the war, when they were about to call for "Volunteers to the Front!" He hardly listened; he only wondered dully why there had to be a drawing of lots. And while Suvarov made the preparations for the drawing, cutting a newspaper into unequal strips, so that he who drew the shortest would be selected, a thought, like lightning, struck him. He was Klein; he had been called and he had come. He was to be made a murderer. And with this came another thought: What if I should not draw the shortest? What if I should not have to go and raise my arm and shoot? What if I should be spared this cup of sorrow? And so it came about that, at the time of drawing, he was, after all, the most agitated of those present; not visibly so, but internally convulsed with a tensity that filled the veins at his temples near to bursting.

First, Suvarov drew, from Badele's hand—then, Badele, Müllerova, Adlerova, the gray man, each drew a strip; only Mirjam and Klein remained. "Now you, comrade!" Suvarov turned with a smile to Ignaz. With two long strides, somehow soldierly, the youth stepped up to Suvarov and looked down at the narrow, bloodless hand from which showed the tips of two paper strips. The eyes of Suvarov held those of Ignaz. And so they stood for a moment. The Russian smiled. Ignaz felt the perspiration break out on his forehead, and said, with difficulty: "Sister Feuerbach—first!" Suvarov smiled, and with the smooth gesture of a croupier—voilà—he held his closed hand toward Mirjam. Her face was very red. She drew, without hesitation. The Russian smiled and turned to Ignaz: "You have drawn the shortest strip. I congratulate you, comrade! You have what you wanted. I congratulate you!" he said once more, very heartily, and shook Ignaz by the hand. Ignaz's hand hung limp. In his left, he held the short strip of newspaper which the other had given him. Was not the strip ragged at one end, as though it had been clipped at the last moment by a thumb-nail? And then, while the Russian shook his limp hand—then, Ignaz Klein also smiled. Oh, he was not without clear-sighted bitterness at this moment!

GUTJAHR, Herr Gutjahr, was now a well-to-do man, who had long since moved from the old house into better quarters. He was now a respected citizen, wore a bowler, carried cane and gloves when he went out to business. The only thing that continued to oppress him was that he could not change the nature of his business. One thing brought on another; he could not free himself. First, there had been his terror at the discovery of Ruben Feuerbach at the bed of the slain Abel (in his hasty departure, he had been unable to persuade the boy to leave the corpse and, before he could use force, a noise on the stairs outside had driven him and Anton away). Then, this terror had suddenly turned to wild joy at the incredible self-accusation and obvious madness of the boy. Now, there were new terrors.

Anton was a dull accomplice, and often troublesome. He was stolid and persistent in his logic; he insisted scrupulously on his part of the loot and demanded cash. Although still held in check, Anton was a constant menace. True, Gutjahr was once more clutched by terror when Ruben was declared innocent and released from jail; true, the thought of getting the young man into his power once more flitted through his head. But he soon discovered that Ruben was now actually and completely insane. His mind was harmlessly, but hopelessly confused. Acquitted as a martyr, a miracle-worker, he was soon surrounded by a flock of misery-burdened followers, who were still more harmless than their newly acclaimed prophet. No, no danger threatened from that side. Danger lay only in Anton. It is more than probable that the harassed man undertook the coup of luring still another

Communist messenger to his fate, solely to keep Anton busy, to sidetrack him and, if possible, to have him run his neck into a noose. That it turned out differently, that the uncouth dullard once more made a complete job of it and now came, with bloody hands, demanding money—this threw the would-be burgher into cowardly fear. He thought: Here I sit in my room! Whoever looks for me, can find me! Would it not be better to disappear for a few days? He took his coat, gloves and cane and locked up his apartment.

That was on the 11th, two days before Anton, while drunk, had betrayed him. So the young Party member who had been sent by the Class D group to reconnoiter could only report that the bird had flown. And therefore, all that Suvarov could say to Ignaz Klein, when he shook his hand at parting, was: "Where you will find Gutjahr, I don't know. But we will release Horak. He knows where to find your man. He will search for him and lead you to him. But you may do as you please about this. As you wish, comrade!" Ignaz nodded—nodded. He nodded a last farewell, turned, opened the door and stepped out into the night.

The first thing he saw was Anton Horak, still half drunk, reeling along the black street and, beyond the blacker black of the huge grain elevator, crossing to the avenue, where the glare of the first arc-light splashed on the pavement. Ignaz stood still, motionless in the darkness. The lonely night wind moaned around him. He looked at the lumbering man. The dry reeds rustled. A black cat skimmed obliquely across the road. Now, the distant, staggering man was close to the lighted street. Not to-night! Klein's lips whispered into the stillness. I don't want to be alone to-night—not to-night! And suddenly, the high-shouldered, bespectacled youth came to life and ran. A tawny cat skimmed across the road. Ignaz ran. Finally, a little out of breath, he reached the uncouth man, at the corner of the lighted street, and said: "Good evening!" The stupefied lout looked up and tried to focus his eyes on the speaker. He did not quite succeed. But what cared he who walked at his side? He raised his hand and talked aloud into the night wind. Ignaz kept pace with him.

There was wine on the wooden table in the dark garden of an obscure inn, and the night was mild; only the light from an occasional street-car, rumbling by in the distance behind the foliage, at times revealed a glass, a forehead, a hand, a bottle. Eerily, behind the closed shutters of the bar-room, a gramophone sang its homey folk-songs. Stars were watching. Anton lifted his glass and said: "Prost, Jew!" The other started. So he had recognized him at last! But he lifted his glass and said: "Prost!" Is it he who sips of this strange and sour beverage? He closes his eyes and drinks. It tastes horrible, but it warms. Something within him insists: What am I doing? With whom am I sitting, and on the very same bench? To-morrow, I will be a murderer!

Anton aimed a wavering forefinger at one of the distant, lighted, noiseless street-cars and said: "Pff! Huuiii! Boom! He is gone!" Ignaz looked at him, in startled bewilderment. "What is gone?" he asked. Anton's noxious breath came closer: "I got him, Jew! Shrapnel!" The bemuddled brain seemed to understand the bewilderment of the other and added, while his glassy eyes glittered with amusement: "In the war!" Then, there was silence again. A wavering finger drew the course of an airplane in the sky.

Ignaz was silent, and emptied his glass in timid sips. He felt as though he had suddenly shrunk in the glassy darkness. Near-sighted and insignificant, he sat on a bench beside the sprawling drunkard, while in the bar-room the gramophone tramped out a march. Anton tramped in time to the strain, lifted his glass to Ignaz and said: "Every shot got a Russian!" And he felt compelled to empty his full glass in honor of the past. Far in the distance, a lighted street-car crawled through the branches. Bending down to Ignaz, the drunken brute stabbed a blunt finger into the blackness of the night and said: "Chop through it! Always chop through where the bones are weakest. First, the feet must come off. And you can't wrench out the hip-bone." He stabbed his blunt finger into the blackness of the night and said: "In the sewer, the bones march to the river!" And, gruesomely gay: "Bones—swim. Because the rats gnaw off the meat."

And when they were once more on their way, when they walked side by side—their steps resounding from the house-walls upon the startled asphalt—when they walked along the deserted street, Anton said, once more referring to the Russians and demonstrating the use of the bayonet on them: "Crrtsh! In and turn! Crrtsh! In and turn!"

On through lighted streets, through a dark side-street, where people slept behind secure walls. Not a window was lighted in the house before which Anton lingered for several minutes. It was a snug-looking apartment house. Anton crossed to the opposite sidewalk and looked up at the black windows. From the upper row, frostily reflected, ghost of a ghost, the moonlight winked shyly, as though a festive gathering of specters up there danced noiselessly in an empty hall. Steadily gazing up at the house, Anton put two fingers to his lips and whistled shrilly. He listened. Then, he whistled a second time. And a third time. There was no answer; no window showed any light. He cursed dully under his breath. Then, he turned away, and Ignaz suddenly sobered. The night seemed cold, and he shivered. This is Hechtgasse, he said to himself. And that whistle was meant for Gutjahr. Gutjahr is hiding. It is Gutjahr the other is looking for. To-morrow, you will be a murderer! Caught in his reflections, he had allowed Anton to get far ahead of him, and he had to hasten with long strides to catch up. Then, they came into the neighborhood of an old house and went into another little inn and drank. They were the only customers. There was not a sign of Gutjahr. "Whoeeee!" said Anton. "Crrtsh! In and turn!" he said. He demonstrated it; he held an invisible bayonet in his hand. Ignaz said: "A man like me is ever best alone; he ought to live alone and die alone!" This he concluded sadly, and the light from the hanging lamp mirrored itself in his spectacles. The dull-eyed lout repeated: "Crrtsh! In and turn!" It was as if the moon had an invisible bayonet in its hand. And one went through sleeping streets and was so tall that one could drum a march on the housetops, and push over the reeling lamp-posts with a forefinger. The night was very warm. Somewhere, a gramophone grated; was it a gramophone? Ignaz stopped and said into the night: "I am drunk!"

Then, there was laughter. Roguishly, they climbed into chairs and cautiously peered over a screen into an adjoining room. (Over there, in the mirror, like two moons, the two faces rose above the wooden rim!) About twenty people were sitting there. "He is very late to-day!" said one, who seemed almost transparent, with only a tiny voice left in his sunken chest. Kurila nodded: "He will come!" She nodded many times in assurance. Her smile glowed with confidence. Then—who was that just coming in? Anton supported himself on Ignaz's shoulder in order to see better. Yes, it was Wurmbrand. He wore a black coat, pinned together at the throat, and he shook them all by the hand. "He is late to-day!" he said. Behind him were seven men, seven skinny men, seven threadbare souls in shriveled skins. The two, standing on chairs, giggled. But just then, the inn-keeper pulled them down and shoved them through the outer door. "For whom are they waiting?" asked Ignaz, over his shoulder. "For Ruben Feuerbach," said the inn-keeper, and locked the door on the inside.

A drab morning dawned. Ignaz Klein was tired and dull of thought. Anton had long since fallen into gloomy silence. But at the corner of Flurstrasse, at five o'clock in the morning, as they were walking toward the market-place, in front of "The Goulash," he turned abruptly to the bespectacled youth and growled: "What are you hanging around me for, Jew?" Ignaz did not answer.

This "Goulash" was a combination of coffee-house and beer-shop across from the big market, and was originally meant for the convenience of farmers, gardeners, hucksters and their helpers. But as this place naturally was the only one open at five o'clock in the morning, there could be found in it, besides these red-faced, vigorous people, many other folk, weary stragglers who either called no roof their own or who were on their way home after a wakeful night and were fortifying themselves against the morning chill with a glass of tea or mulled wine. Whores sat there, musicians from the night cabarets, visitors from the country who had arrived on the early local train. Ignaz and Anton seated themselves close to the stove, which scorched everything within close proximity with its too dry heat. Silently, they drank out of huge cups a hot drink made of malt. Next to them, a girl was asleep. Three men in high boots sat nearby and conversed in loud voices. Over all was a wakeful sleepiness, a sleepy wakefulness, that set heads nodding all around.

Then came Gutjahr. Ignaz and Anton saw him simultaneously while he was still on the outside of the glass-paneled door. He stood there, talking with a young man. He talked with him for quite a while; then, they shook hands, and he entered. The expression on his full, clean-shaven face was one of weariness and assumed nonchalance. He wore a dark, obviously new suit and a short leather coat. He strolled across the room without seeing either Ignaz or Anton, and seated himself between a market woman and a sleeping, rouged boy. When he looked up, Anton was already standing before him. Horak had stepped up to him with slow, swinging strides. Only a chair remained between them; nothing else. Anton said: "The pleasure is mine!" Gutjahr blinked his eyes, as one blinks one's eyes when one expects a blow. He did not move. Anton said: "Keeping away from me! Double-crossing me! I'll get you, anyway—now, if I want!" He raised his red fist. Gutjahr's lids quivered. He said nothing, sat motionless and stared, stared, fascinated, at the red fist, looming close to his face. Anton spoke, and it was as if he were tearing a last coherent human utterance from his animal rage: "My money!" The market woman grew restless; the three men in high boots turned their red faces at the growl. Only the rouged boy slept on. "My money!" came a last, distant voice out of Anton. The room was deadly still. Only the bloated inn-keeper's wife pushed forward through the gaping crowd.

Ignaz was still sitting where he had been, his legs grown weak and trembling, and he saw how Gutjahr suddenly raised his eyes and looked steadily at Anton. He did not open his lips—he seemed to surmise that his first word would unloose an elemental force. Anton loomed motionless, his gigantic fist swaying slowly to and fro. The market woman, sitting next to Gutjahr, suddenly jumped up and fled behind the gaping crowd. The rouged boy slept. Gutjahr, tense and pale, knowing his life at stake, stared fixedly into Anton's face, which was gradually reddening and growing less taut. His eyes squinted. The fist wavered—wavered. Anton mumbled under his breath: "No friendship!" Ignaz heard. And then, he saw the fist unclench and melt; only a clumsy hand remained, supporting itself on the back of a chair. At this moment, Gutjahr opened his lips and, in a low voice, began to talk to the other.

All this Ignaz saw—saw it, and felt something heavy in his pocket: a revolver. All this he saw, and realized: now you have found him! Therefore: now, now! Now you will raise your hand, and the fat barmaid will scream, the painted boy will start out of his dream. . . . Oh, no! You won't see that, for the red-faced driver next to you—he is looking out of the window, at present—will jump at your throat. You will fall; they will kick you and call the police. But then you will be able to sleep. You had better do it now. Ignaz slowly lifted himself from behind the table. It will be better, he thought, if I go up closer to him, casually, nonchalantly. But, he thought, I can't walk—my feet are so weak! In four minutes, the clock over there will be half-past-five, and it is the 14th. He stood erect and put his hand in his pocket.

"Herr Klein!" some one said, and stretched out a fleshy hand. It was Rafael Meier; he wore a short fur jacket and spats. He said: "You here? What are you doing here?"—and he laughed without reason. Ignaz stood rigid, his right hand in his pocket. "Thanks!" he said, foolishly and absent-mindedly, staring fixedly at the two, absorbed in a low-voiced conversation. But Meier talked. Meier said: "I? Perhaps you don't know it—I was married about a month ago. Married Frau Band—you met her at my place some time since." Ignaz suddenly became deathly pale and his knees shook. He sank feebly into a chair and leaned back against the wall. Over there, Gutjahr whispered to Anton. Meier talked. I must get rid of this fellow! thought Ignaz. I must get rid of him at once, or nothing will happen! Something within him insisted: in vain; too late; in vain! Meier talked. He said: "Frau Band got her divorce. The furniture belonged to her, and so did the money. And now, I am in the pickle business." Ignaz groaned inwardly. Meier went on, remorselessly: "The pickles come in barrels, from Znaim and Retz. For retail purposes, we bottle them." Ignaz closed his eyes. When he opened them again, he saw the glass door closing behind Gutjahr and Anton. Something rushed and roared over him like stormy waters. "But don't believe," he heard, and it came from afar, "that we neglect the higher things . . ." Something picked him up; something swung him to and fro. ". . . Every Friday, we have a meeting in our place. If you would like to come . . . But what is the matter with you, Herr Klein? Don't you feel well?" Ignaz reeled. ". . . Probably hasn't eaten anything," he heard Meier say. And then he lay stretched out on a bench in the bar-room. Meier said: "If you are looking for a position—bookkeeper—"

And suddenly Mirjam Feuerbach was there and, with her efficient nurse's grip under his arm, led him outside. "I always eat my breakfast here," she said. "I am looking after the people in those tenement houses across the way. And if I'm not there before seven o'clock, I don't find them at home any more." Her face was deeply flushed. "I didn't sleep last night," muttered Ignaz, in excuse of his weakness. The cool morning air refreshed him. "I know," said Mirjam, and looked full into his eyes. And after a pause, she said, again, with sudden warmth: "I know, comrade!" She had linked her arm into his, and there was a sense of security in her touch. He forced foot before foot in the dawning light and said nothing. Then, he heard Mirjam's sensitive voice once more: "You should go home now, Ignaz. I can't go with you any farther. I have much to do." She saw his eyes, and added: "But if you want to come over to my place for a while this afternoon—" The city rumbled; huge carts with cabbages passed them; somewhere, metal clanked on metal, and the air was mild. Mirjam asked: "Do you live alone? No, to-day you must go to your people—it's better." Ignaz shook his head. In a low voice, he said: "To my people? I haven't been there for many months, now. No! Never again!" But Mirjam was not to be put off. "To-day," she said, "you shouldn't be alone." And, cautiously: "Don't think too much about the other thing. You are too weak now. To-morrow will be time enough. Or—later." They had come to a street corner, and she held out her hand. "Go to your people to-day, do you hear? Don't remain alone to-day!" she said. She gazed after him. He went on slowly, and stumbled slightly. And then she called after him: "Ignaz! At five o'clock, if you wish! I'll be home!" Then, she looked at her watch and quickly retraced her steps.

When she gave her social work in the tenements as an excuse to Ignaz for her presence in "The Goulash" at such an early hour, Mirjam told the truth—but not the whole truth. Shortly after the drawing of the lots and after Ignaz had left them, they had received a message that had made the members of the D Group thoughtful. The confidential man of the free trades reported from the police barracks that the force was being held in readiness for immediate action—in consequence, no doubt, of the thinly veiled threat of an otherwise conservative evening paper that the next morning's expected verdict in the Orth trial would—"in case it was once more a biased, class verdict, arouse such a storm as the city has never before witnessed. We are," the paper said, "prepared and waiting." The facts of the Orth trial—it was the one Suvarov had mentioned—were these: Even though members of the Swastika were the murderers and working-men the victims, and even though there was some truth in Suvarov's assertion that the Courts had shown a marked partiality in similar cases, the facts, however, in this case were too one-sidedly clear and too fully corroborated by the frank confession of the culprits to permit a serious man seriously to doubt that any judge could or would allow a verdict other than many years of penal servitude, capital punishment having been abolished. If, despite this, a number of politicians asserted in the factional newspapers that they saw a possibility of acquittal, they did so solely because they meant to point to the eventual sentencing of the murderers as a victory of their own intrepid pens. And the members of the opposite camp were preparing themselves to canonize the convicted men as martyrs of terrorism. In short, all were seeking excuses for agitation, the chief elections being close at hand.

The possibility of an acquittal had, as if by a silent agreement between the political factions, become the main bone of contention. All the more startling, all the more serious, therefore, to the initiated was this report of the preparedness of the police forces. And even if this were only the so-called "usual preparedness," it established that the police, and therefore the Government, were seriously figuring upon a possible acquittal and the consequent "storm." "They are toying with the thought," said Suvarov, "but I don't believe it will happen. Well, we'll all know a lot more after the verdict!" he concluded, somewhat facetiously. After Ignaz Klein's departure, his humor had taken a visible turn for the better. As they were leaving, even while they were already standing in the street before "The Shepherdess," a second report came, which gave them cause for serious thought. The Socialist party was making hasty preparations for a mass demonstration, for a gigantic march, in case the Orth trial should actually end in acquittal. Suvarov went back into the inn, seated himself in the now deserted bar-room, took off his hat with great deliberation and said: "Something must be done!" And there, between hammer and anvil, so to speak, after a short deliberation, they came to the tragic, most tragic decision.

Suvarov mused. So the Socialists were also playing with the thought of a possible acquittal! "Is this demonstration only a gesture for the coming election? All the better! We will discredit them!" To discredit the two enemy parties, police and

Socialists, one to the other, was Suvarov's ambition. "How?" asked the gray-haired man. Suvarov lit a cigarette: "Didn't you learn how in Zürich? The demonstration must be interrupted. We must see to it that the demonstrators cause some disturbance, and that the police interfere a little!" He paused and continued: "But all this is merely a joke. It will never get that far!" "We must be prepared!" Badele said, slowly. Suvarov smiled. "You are always prepared, but you never do anything! This Klein, for example, would have preferred to run away from his job at the last moment. Perhaps he already has done so. What were we talking about? Yes! At present, it is sufficient to keep an eye on developments. Now, who will take that over?" "I," said Mirjam. Suvarov looked at her. "You, comrade? You, again? Good!" he said. "When do they expect the verdict?" Müllerova went to the telephone. The others waited in silence. After a while, she returned and said, in her beautiful voice: "To-morrow at noon—that is the schedule. But the assistant judge believes the trial will last until late to-morrow evening. There is an actual possibility that they may be acquitted—on account of the opinions of the experts that were given this morning. The confession of the defendants is of no importance, so the engineer of the fire-arms division claimed, for in the general shooting they could not possibly have known at whom they were aiming and whom they hit. The expert is Engineer Löffler, of the German Home Rifle Association." The gray-haired man jumped up, pounded his fist on the table and shouted: "Assassins! Those judges deserve to be killed!" Mirjam had also jumped up, but she was silent. Suvarov looked in astonishment from one to the other; then, he nodded to Müllerova, and asked: "Anything else?" She continued, in her beautiful voice: "The Socialists' march will be as usual. They are divided into districts, the different trades marching separately. Meetings have been called in all halls for final orders at twelve o'clock to-night." Suvarov whistled through his teeth. By now, they were all on their feet. "Anything else?" he asked. Müllerova answered: "Nothing else." A long, thoughtful silence. Suvarov lit a fresh cigarette and said: "And still, this is all only a joke! Nothing will happen! Comrade Feuerbach, come to see me to-morrow morning, at ten. Then, I'll know how to proceed. Now, I'll have to visit several people." With sober face, he offered each one his ice-cold hand. They separated.

Mirjam had not said a word about all these events to Ignaz. It was seven o'clock when she left him, and it was eight o'clock before she had finished her work in the tenement house. Two idle hours lay before her; she had to be at Suvarov's at ten. It had grown warm and very bright. Slowly strolling along, unconsciously glad of the elastic swaying of her healthy body, she found herself in the side-street and decided, after another glance at her watch, to visit her mother.

Shortly after joining the Communist party, Mirjam had left her parents' apartment and moved into a furnished room, to be nearer the district of her activities. And as Ruben had soon followed her example, and as Feuerbach, the father, had disappeared, Frau Feuerbach had been forced to vacate the apartment, which was now too large and too expensive, and rent a smaller one. From then on, she was never quite settled. Without giving any reason, she changed her domicile every few months, and at times even every few weeks. And as Mirjam was too occupied with the routine of her new responsibilities seriously to inform herself of her mother's doings, and as just at this time Abel had been murdered and Ruben placed in jail, the lonely woman did as she pleased. "It is nearly five weeks since I went to see her!" Mirjam thought, as she climbed the stairs to the fourth floor. She still had an hour and a half to herself. She rang the bell.

No one answered. But when she turned the knob, the door opened and she found herself in the kitchen. Another room lay beyond, the door to which was closed. By the window, half hidden by curtains and peering down on the courtyard, stood Frau Feuerbach. She held a piece of linen in her hand; in a corner stood the sewing machine by which she earned her living with plain sewing. She had only interrupted her work for a moment to look out on the court. She did not even turn when Mirjam entered, and only said: "Shhh!" Mirjam went up to her and said, softly: "How are you, Mother?" She was horrified at the appearance of the suddenly aged woman. Her mother did not answer her greeting, said "Shhh!" again, and brushed thoughts from her brow. A strand of grayish white hair straggled over her eyes. Mirjam asked: "Anything new, Mother?" As though she seemed to be telling a secret, Frau Feuerbach spoke: "I am moving!" "Why?" asked Mirjam. "Shhh!" said Frau Feuerbach, and peered cautiously out into the court. She was talking to herself, without words. "Why are you going to move, Mother?" asked Mirjam, and placed her arm around the old woman's fleshless shoulders. "Shhh!" said Frau Feuerbach, as though she were telling a secret, and then she whispered: "She is spying on me! She has found out again where I live!" Mirjam asked: "Who, Mother? Who?" Frau Feuerbach turned and looked blankly at her daughter. "That Gutjahr woman!" she whispered. A great fear entered Mirjam's heart. Why have I paid no attention to her! Why have I neglected her! she said to herself. Then aloud, with forced calmness, pressing her arm closer about the old woman: "No one is spying on you, Mother! The Gutjahr woman is bed-ridden somewhere—paralyzed!" Frau Feuerbach raised a waving, wavering forefinger and pointed down to the court across which many people were passing. As though she were telling a secret, she whispered: "They are all spies! They don't look up—they are afraid I shall notice! But they look out of the corners of their eyes—like this! But I know it!" Mirjam felt her blood turn to ice. "Mother!" she said, in a shaky voice. Why have I so neglected her! a voice within her lamented. "Mother!" she said, gently. "Mother! Why should they spy on you?" Frau Feuerbach turned to her, and there was astonishment in her blank gaze. "On account of Ruben," she said, in a matter-of-fact voice. "On account of Ruben. They want to tell Father about Ruben. But I'll go to her! I'll go to her!" "Mother!" whispered Mirjam; and suddenly the kitchen swam in glassy tears. But the old woman was far away. She was brushing tormenting thoughts from her brow with the flat of her hand.

Suddenly, she reached for her woolen shawl and wrapped it around her shoulders. "Mother!" moaned Mirjam. The universe lay frozen in hard, dull glassy tears. The old woman looked at her, unseeing, and said, severely: "To-day is Thursday. I have to stand in line for meat." Mirjam lowered her eyes. Dust lay on the floor; the dust of many weeks. Were those spider-webs in the corner? I have neglected her so! thought Mirjam. She said: "I am coming again to-night, Mother. I'll bring something to eat. And a bottle of wine. And I'll clean up the kitchen and the other room." She turned to the door of the closed room, but the old woman grabbed her arm and whispered: "Don't go in there! Ruben is asleep! It is Thursday. I have to stand in line for meat." Mirjam followed her. She looked at her watch. It was fifteen minutes to ten. Fortunately, Suvarov lived in the neighborhood. She ran. On Kleiststrasse, she saw a bottle of cheap country liqueur in the window of a grocery store. She thought it over. She had money. She smiled as she ran on. At the corner were oranges. "To-night, the stores will be closed," she excused her foolishness. Then, she saw sardines; cheap—a sale. She carried seven little packages when she entered Suvarov's room.

As she entered, she saw that the bed had been pushed close against the right wall. On it lay a strange man with his head bandaged. He was groaning. On a chair next to the bed sat Adlerova, feeling his pulse. At her side, on a nightstand, water was boiling over an electric stove; instruments in the water, hypodermic needles. Next to this, against the wall, sat two men with the insignia of the Red Hawks. One of them, a black-haired fellow, had his arm in a sling. Then, there were a few confidential men from the trades unions, two or three youngsters in uniform, a few men whom Mirjam did not know, also several women—she could not see them very clearly, for the room was crammed with people, and yet there was a continuous ebbing and flowing, like a stream flowing from the table over by the window to the door and again from the door to the table—the table by the window, where Suvarov sat. He was wearing a new black suit, somehow reminiscent of the Russian working-man's blouse. Next to him, bent over the table, stood Müllerova, her left hand on the telephone, ready at any moment to lift the receiver, while with her right hand she jotted down various items on her stenographer's pad.

When Mirjam entered the room, she heard Suvarov say, in a sharp, terse, changed voice, to one of the men standing at attention before him: "I repeat: without insignia, without identification papers, without Party-books. Furthermore, Badele is on a tour of inspection. Wait in the meeting hall." The man saluted and left. Suvarov turned back to Müllerova and said, in an undertone: "Where were we?" And the woman read, in her beautiful, soft voice: ". . . 'The blood of our two murdered comrades falls upon the heads of the judges and their minions.' " Suvarov said: "Write: 'But let them beware, lest the wrath of a betrayed people wipe them out! Let them beware'—have you got that?—'beware, when the battalions of the working class—' " The telephone shrilled: "Yes, this is Silberstern," said Müllerova, and then:

"—Yes!—Yes!—Yes!" Suvarov had pulled her book over to him and was writing. Müllerova said to him: "Comrade No. 14. He asks"—her voice sank to a whisper—"if the machine guns—" Suvarov tore the receiver from her hand and shouted: "Mount them!" And, calm once more: "Where did we leave off, Natasha?" The man on the bed moaned. Adlerova whispered over to the others: "His lung is pierced. He ought to be in a hospital. Pulse 36. I won't vouch for him." Suvarov frowned and decided: "The hospital won't do. That means the police!" "But I won't vouch for him!" said Adlerova, and twitched convulsively. "Then, he'll die!" said Suvarov and, turning to the wounded man, he almost shouted: "Are you willing to die for the Revolution, comrade?" But the man did not hear. "Where were we, Natasha?" asked Suvarov. And Müllerova read softly: " 'When the battalions of the working class—' " Suvarov said: "Write: '—come marching, and the crash of shattered windows startles every one out of his sleep. Then, it will be too late! After the torch has once been hurled'—No, cross that out! Write: 'After the ax has once fallen—' " The two looked at each other and smiled faintly. "Gasoline cans," said Müllerova, and hardly moved her lips. And Suvarov said: "Taken care of." Just then, he looked up and noticed Mirjam, who had remained in the background. He called: "At last! I was about to send for you!" Roughly, he pushed his way through the crowd and pulled her into an adjoining room, a narrow chamber, piled high with boxes and trunks. They could hardly find room to stand in the semi-darkness. He closed the door, and now only the confused humming of many voices reached them. Then, the quiet voice of Müllerova: "Herr Silberstern went to Prague yesterday—Yes . . . too bad!" she said into the telephone. Through the wall, on the other side of which stood the bed, came, hardly audible, the sound of heavy breathing and a moan.

Suvarov seated himself on one of the boxes and said: "Are you ready, comrade?" Mirjam stood stiffly erect and said, in a low voice: "I am ready!" Suvarov said: "Then, listen very carefully to what I am about to say! That in there"—he nodded toward the other room—"is a joke. The real task"—he suddenly looked full into her eyes—"is yours!" "I am ready!" said Mirjam, and was conscious of the seven little packages in her arm. Suvarov said: "Then, listen!" He pulled a map of the city out of his pocket and spread it over a trunk. "These red marks," he said, "are the lines of march of the Socialist demonstration. Here are the meeting places of the different groups; also, the starting time. Here is the time of the probable arrival before the Parliament building. These little red squares—there and there—are the meeting halls of the Socialist party. At the double squares, they have weapons secreted—this over here is their main magazine—mostly old stuff, old guns. Then, these little green squares—they are the police stations. These buildings are filled with police. There, in the gardens, are reserves. You understand? Here are the police headquarters, protected by emplacements. I learned this only half an hour ago. Machine guns—there." He talked faster. "An hour ago, they requisitioned six armored cars from the defense force. Whether they are going to get them or not, we don't know. What we know definitely is that the defense force will not intervene. Now, listen! All this is make-believe—a parade, on account of the election. The Socialists are taking women along, even children, which means that there will be no shooting. They are not even thinking of it." He was becoming impatient because in the other room the telephone bell rang continuously. He spoke rapidly: "Let's get done! The blue—that is us. Here, squares. Here, double squares. You understand? Badele is in command. The thin lines—individuals with pamphlets. Stars: shoot a few shots into the air. There—street crossing. A horse shies. Five scream—fifty or five hundred will think those five are being killed." In the next room, the telephone shrilled. Suvarov spoke quickly: "Now, here! In this garage and in this garden are mounted police. If there is a disturbance, they will come and close the street. By that time, the marching locomotive builders should be here. Here, the triangle—small firecrackers—frogs. You understand? Under the horses, you understand? But you don't understand. You are not listening!" He broke off.

Mirjam was not looking at the map. She stood wide-eyed and stared into the man's face. "I don't understand," she said, with difficulty. "That is a lot—at one time!" The heart within her felt faint, and she leaned against the wardrobe. Suvarov was becoming impatient; his voice rang sharply: "It isn't absolutely necessary for you to understand everything. I'll only give you your orders. Pay attention, now!" Mirjam once more stood erect. "A game of chess," she said, in a low, thoughtful voice. "Pawns! Marionettes!" Suvarov looked full into her eyes, and it seemed for a moment as though he were not conscious of his surroundings; as though he were like all the others, a dreamer, a theorist, harassed by his thoughts. "Marionettes, you say, comrade!"—and doubt rang in his voice—"We are all marionettes, I as well as you—we as well as the others in there." In there, the telephone rang; Suvarov did not seem to hear it. "Marionettes!" he said, slowly. "That very likely is the secret of this era! Tragic marionettes! The tragedy of an era of faceless people!" Next door, the telephone shrilled. Mirjam looked into the man's face and said, with the candid smile of a very young girl: "Yes, faceless! Yes, specters! But it doesn't matter. One must somehow survive it. And carry on!"

And then, the witchery that had held the two under a spell fell away from them. Next door, the telephone rang. It rang through the man's brain. He gave a start, remembered, and said: "Yes! Where were we? Oh, yes! You start action to-night yet. The sentence will be pronounced to-night, between twelve and two o'clock. It has so been arranged to hold back the large demonstrations. This afternoon, after luncheon, the prosecutor will present his case. I have read the prepared speech. He will talk for nearly four hours. His speech will be mild—a lot of wind; a speech of exculpation rather than accusation. That means acquittal. The Socialists march between five and five-twenty in the morning, from the periphery to the center. Shortly after six o'clock, they will be before the Parliament building. And now to you. At ten o'clock this evening, you will be at the rear entrance of the municipal lodging-house. There, you will find twenty or thirty men under the leadership of a member of the asylum-group; no doubt you will know him—either 32 or Hadrawa. Our member will bring these men into the court-room, where they will make a scene after the sentence has been pronounced. They will undoubtedly be arrested. But before this, he will have brought you to the women. In Barracks 12, the one before the last, we have fifty women. Thirty of them are jobless and beggars with children, from the lodging-house. Twenty are old prostitutes with venereal diseases, from the hospital. We must keep them in the barracks over night. The officials of the lodging-house have secret orders to open the sleeping-halls at nine o'clock, instead of at five, to hinder the inmates from joining the Socialistic demonstration. Nine o'clock would be too late. I need these fifty women at six o'clock sharp, at the arrival of the van of the march"—he pointed to the map—"here. On the corner of Schillerstrasse, opposite the garage with the hidden mounted police. There is a building under construction, employing female workers. The women must pretend to be looking for work. That will seem natural. At six o'clock, when the mounted police leave the garage to close the street, these women will advance between marchers and police. Then, from here, the firecrackers are thrown under the horses. You have nothing to do with that—that is already arranged. The horses shy—that is all. You understand?"

Mirjam had changed color and was once more leaning against the wardrobe. "I will follow orders, Comrade Suvarov!" she said, in a low voice. Her gaze suddenly fell with surprise on the little packages in her arm. She took them, one by one, and placed them slowly on the big trunk next to her. "It shall be done, Comrade Suvarov!" she whispered. He said hurriedly: "Very well! I picked up these women wherever I could. Tell them they can get easy work at full wages, plus bread and flour as a bonus. They must believe that they are going to work and that you are the forewoman. You understand?" "Yes," said Mirjam, and she was very pale. Next door, the telephone shrilled. The words flew out of his mouth: "Then, it is settled! I am in a hurry. My train leaves at two o'clock. I am going to Constantinople. No, I can tell it to you: I am going to Paris. Perhaps I'll return—some time. Now, be careful! Silence! Not until a quarter to six do you start arousing the women, claiming they refuse to give them the work. And keep on—urge them on! And then, between the marchers and the police! Don't let go! You understand?" "I understand, Comrade Suvarov," said Mirjam, with bloodless lips. She saw Müllerova thrust her head through the open door. "The motor is here," she said, in her soft voice. For a fraction of a second, Mirjam felt an icy-cold hand in hers. In the doorway, the man once more turned. It seemed as if he tried to remember something. "Marionettes!" he said, with the faintest of smiles. "I am going. Somewhere. A new task. A new stage." He looked into her eyes: "How does it go, comrade?" And, softly: "You will survive and carry on!" He nodded shortly and disappeared. When, half a minute later, Mirjam crossed through the other room, they had all gone. Only Adlerova was still sitting silently at the bed. The man with the bandage had died.

SHEET-LIGHTING

IGNAZ KLEIN, after deliberating Mirjam's advice to go and see his people, morbidly hesitant and torturing himself with derisive self-accusation—"Too cowardly to remain alone; and you are supposed to have the courage to shoot this man!"—finally rejected it, went to his room and went to bed. Half an hour later, without having found the longed-for sleep, he dressed himself again and sat down at the table which also served as his writing desk and wrote a letter, a letter to the world—a document, incidentally, that was never found. A singular unrest drove him out on the street and, despite his overpowering drowsiness, he went to the coffee-house where he was in the habit of spending his afternoons. The place was almost deserted—not one of the habitual chess-players was there at this hour. The idle waiter came over to him and spoke at great length about the Orth trial—while Ignaz was called "Doctor" when in the place, he was referred to as "the Communist" when absent, though no one knew why this nickname had been given him. Ignaz said: "Betrayal, Josef! Betrayal! They ought to be shot!" But he stopped abruptly at the sudden thought that, sooner or later, this flat-footed waiter in his threadbare, black suit would stand before the bar at a certain trial and testify regarding this conversation. He took his leave—too hastily; that too he will tell, he thought—and retraced the three or four blocks to his room. He threw himself, fully dressed, on the bed and fell asleep at once.

At eleven-forty-five, he was awakened by the asthmatic snore of a parquet brush. His landlady was energetically waxing the floor of the adjoining room. She stopped in surprise when she saw him. So he was home! she remarked. And she hadn't known it, and twice she had sent away some one who had been there at nine and at half-past-ten—a little, skinny man with a beard. Who would come to see me? thought Ignaz. From the Party? he wondered. A counter order? Then, I won't have to lift the revolver! But he spurned the thought and despised himself for his hopes. "He'll be back at twelve o'clock," said the landlady. And at four minutes to twelve, Samuel Klein came for the third time, looking for his son.

He came and stood in the frame of the door, opened so softly and slowly, standing heavy-footed, like a weary peddler, his red beard hanging uncared-for around his chin, and said: "Ignaz! Good morning, Ignaz!" Since Klein's arrest, Ignaz had paid not the slightest attention to his father. "I am severing all ties between myself and the past," he had said, in a letter. Although he had not visited his father in jail before the trial, his cheeks had burned with shame while following the trial in the newspapers; and after his father had been sentenced, he even forced his thoughts, his memory, away from him. Now he is free again! he reflected, impassively. The apartment in Goethestrasse had been sequestered for the creditors—that much he had heard. They had moved into some wretched quarter of the city—that was the last bit of information that had come to him. Now, the person that was his father unexpectedly stood in the doorway, and said, humbly: "It is I, Ignaz!" He held his round, narrow-brimmed hat in his hand and said: "Selma sent me. Selma wants to see you." He paused; then, continued: "You see—we are going away to-day. We are going back to Lemberg and we would like to—that is—Selma would like to—" He paused and stared down at his ragged shoes. When they went down the stairs, Samuel Klein said: "Malzgasse 64. It isn't far. We go across the bridge." But at the outer door, he stood still and said: "You walk ahead, Ignaz." And Ignaz—his heart was filled with conflicting emotions—asked: "Why?" His father looked down at his shoes and said: "Perhaps you would not like to be seen on the street with me." There was a great silence between the two, and a great desolation.

Klein's dwelling on Malzgasse was in a house in the Jewish quarter—a house of eighty-two families; a place of corridors, with open wooden galleries in front of every floor, giving on the courtyard, whence came the wailing of children, hammering, stench, the breath and noises of eighty-two pent-in families. Klein's dwelling consisted of living-room, kitchen and bed-room and was on the top floor in the rear, overlooking an empty lot. In the living-room lay Selma, asleep. Klein turned in the doorway and whispered to Ignaz: "Don't wake her. She had a bad night, my poor, dear Selma! And now, we have to go on our journey yet. Let her sleep!" Moreover, there was no room for them in the bedchamber. It was piled high with trunks, bundles, boxes, all packed and ready for departure; and Klein's sister was there with Moritz, Ignaz's brother, who had grown very tall and whose cold and ugly face wore a malevolent expression. The two were quarreling in a grating undertone—about some money that should be there, but wasn't. So the Kleins, father and son, sat down in the kitchen, the one on a small wooden bench, the other on a footstool—sat and waited.

Time passed. The elder Klein said: "It is two and a half months now that I have been out." Silence. Ignaz said: "So you are going back to Lemberg!" He thought: I will be tried in Lemberg, after I have killed Gutjahr! Silence again. The elder Klein said: "When I came out, I went back to the old place—it was closed up. Passover! And then, I found Aunt Rifke and Selma and Moritz already here in Malzgasse. I say: 'Selma, love, give me only two weeks, and you will have food to eat and a place to sleep!' She replies: 'Father, if you are with us, it doesn't matter!' Says Rifke: 'What will you do, Brother?' 'Hustle and peddle!' I say, and laugh. 'Start in from the bottom!' I say, and Selma comes over and sits on my knee. That was on a Saturday. Comes Monday—I go into a coffee-house and telephone and listen around. 'Klein is out again!' they say. One shakes me by the hand, as if he were pinning a medal on me. Business? I run around. Do you know what it means to run around, Ignaz, from seven in the morning until ten at night? And no business? Do you know what it means to be a bankrupt? You say you do? You know nothing! I advertise—the bailiff comes in the morning: 'You want to do business, so you must have plenty of money. Give it to me!' . . . 'Selma, love,' I say, 'give me only two weeks more, and you will have food to eat and a place to sleep!'" He wiped his forehead, and Ignaz looked at the old man sitting there, who was his father. His language has changed, said Ignaz to himself; his voice has changed. Brooks murmur like that. Like that murmur lamentations when some one has died.

Samuel Klein said: "In the seventh week, there was not bread enough and Selma found it out and didn't want to eat. And there was no doctor for Selma in the seventh week and no money for rent. In the seventh week, I went to Birkmeier. You know about Birkmeier?" Like the murmuring of lamentations when some one has died, thought Ignaz. "Birkmeier," he heard from far away, "Birkmeier is representing the creditors, as an adviser for the receiver. At the same time, Birkmeier is representing the Nationalists in the department of food distribution. Birkmeier is a candidate in this election. Birkmeier is climbing to the top. His son is there—that about the forged notes is forgotten—Birkmeier paid. His son is the big macher in the Swastika—with the shock troops. Birkmeier will be elected through his son, who forged the notes. Where was I? In the seventh week"—the lamenting brook moaned on, moaned on—"in the seventh week, I went to Birkmeier. Not in jail—only then, when I went to Birkmeier, was I punished for my sins. 'Help me!' I say to him. 'I don't want a present,' I say to him, 'I will soon get some work.' I say to him: 'My child is starving!'" Klein wiped the perspiration from his forehead and said in a very low voice: "He doesn't say: 'No!' He doesn't say: 'Go away!' He lets me talk to the bitter end and listens. I think yet when I am through: A goy—but he has a heart! I was wrong about him, I think yet. Then, he rings the bell for a servant and has me dragged out, here, by the arm, like a criminal. Through the corridor, in front of all the people, down the stairs, to the front door . . ." With trembling fingers, he wiped the perspiration from his face. He continued, and his voice was hardly audible: "The next day—here I sit, with Selma, and I still say: 'Now, Selma, love, now things will be better; now, to-day; eat, Selma, love, I made some money, I am making money!' Then comes a detective. A complaint is out against me for begging." He nodded to himself many times and said: "He had me reported to the police." The thin hands rested on the bony knees. Thus Job must have lamented.

Ignaz said: "Wealth! To cling to wealth—to grasp wealth. That is our heritage!" He said it without vehemence, and nodded while he said it. The elder Klein also nodded. "Lemberg," he said, "back to Lemberg! Sixteen years ago, when we came here—you were a child then, and Siegmund was alive. And Blanka—Blanka, too, was—" And thus they sat there and the time passed. Ignaz said: "That is our heritage!" I am going to kill somebody! he thought. He doesn't know it, that man, that stranger over there. I'm going to shoot somebody! Time passed. Samuel Klein gazed through the wall, beyond the wall, and said: "To the rabbi of Sadagora. I will look for him. Perhaps he can tell me! I will ask him the reason why a Jew must never be on top—why a Jew must always be thrust down to the bottom again!" He bent over to his son and said solemnly, thoughtfully: "You know what I believe, Ignaz, my son—why God always takes away again, if one of us has got too much? I believe it is because a Jew must not have too much baggage, so that he can move on!" Ignaz saw the old man's eyes suddenly grow bright with forced gayety. He was looking at the door. There stood Selma.

"Ignaz!" she said, and passed her arm through his. She was plump and very beautiful—a pale beauty of more than ordinary attractiveness, but somehow unearthly, as though a veil hung between her face and reality. "Ignaz!" she said. "Ignaz!" Samuel Klein had become feebly vivacious, and said, with forced liveliness: "Well—we are going soon, now! Ignaz will take us to the train." The girl looked wonderingly at her brother, lifted the heavy black hair away from her forehead (Ignaz knew that she could only think when this burden was removed from her head) and asked slowly: "Ignaz stays here?" The elder Klein, shuffling, said—and he seemed delighted when he said it: "Ignaz cannot leave the city. Ignaz must stay here. Ignaz is an educated man. Ignaz will be a great man in the city, some day." Ignaz was silent. Selma's heavy-lidded eyes clung to her brother. She said—and a world perished in the two words: "Ignaz stays!" The old man looked helplessly down at his shoes; and Ignaz remained silent.

Moritz thrust his ugly head in at the door—for a few moments, his quarrel with Klein's sister had become sharp and loud, and then it had suddenly died out. Moritz said: "This is no time for schmus! The train is leaving!" He spoke vehemently, yet without vehemence—that was his way. And then they all took hold of the trunks, the bundles and boxes and dragged them hastily down the spiral staircase into the courtyard with the galleries. Here, there and upstairs were twenty or thirty people, who gaped at them. A shout of derision fell down upon them and drowned in a puddle of dirty water. "I borrowed a cart from the vegetable woman," said Klein's sister. In feverish haste, they loaded their belongings into the filthy vehicle. Moritz muttered: "Thirty-six minutes!" and pulled ineffectually at the shafts. The elder Klein assisted him; they began to quarrel. Only when Ignaz and the woman leaned their weight against the cart and pushed did it start moving and rolled, creaking, through the court entrance out into the street. Selma walked on the sidewalk. Selma lifted the heavy hair away from her beautiful, severe, somewhat unreal face before which hung an invisible veil.

When they arrived at the station, a limousine, packed high with baggage, stopped at the entrance. Emmerich Farkas leaned out of the car and shouted: "Porter!" No porter was to be seen. Then, he saw some people trundling a mean pushcart before them. "Hey, there!" he shouted. "Take this baggage to the train! I am in a hurry! I'll pay you well!" And when Samuel Klein turned his face toward him, Farkas—yes, Emmerich Farkas!—blushed. A second automobile glided between him and those about the pushcart. And two porters came. He was in a hurry. His train for Paris was leaving in eight minutes. He had sold *Truth*. There was a warrant out for his arrest on the charge of blackmail.

Then came the parting on the platform of the train. A silent handshake. "It is going to be a warm day," Ignaz said, with difficulty, and looked up at the window. He was thinking: If I should go along—forget about Suvarov and go with these people? And he thought: No, you are too cowardly even for that! Had he been less near-sighted, he would have seen Suvarov for a moment. He had come in the automobile that rolled between Farkas and Klein. In the train, he sat next to the newspaperman. In the dining-car, they even exchanged a few words—while Ignaz stood on the platform and thought: No, you are too cowardly even for that! "There is a draught on the platform, Ignaz. Don't catch cold!" said the old man out of the window, smiling wanly. And at last the train started.

And only now, as the train starts, does nostalgia bury its claws like a vulture into the heart of the boy on the station platform. He stretches his arms toward the moving window and runs—runs and wails, although no sound comes from his lips—wails the age-old, primitive lamentation after the moving window, out of which arms reach for him and a face—his face, only much older—a face as old as a race, as grief-laden as a race; a face on which the scanty wilderness of a reddish beard flutters in the rising wind—a face looks back.

But already the train is hastening away at full speed—ra-tat-tat, ra-tat-tat, ra-tat-tat . . .

AT about this time, Mirjam was engaged in a dispute with a journeyman locksmith. The man refused to acknowledge the child which a girl, who had been living with him, was carrying under her heart. "I wasn't the only one!" he growled. Finally, he gave in half-way: "There will be time enough when it's here. I must first see if it looks like me." There was some sense in this, but Mirjam was stubborn. She wanted to settle the affair—settle it this very day. The locksmith squirmed and tried to wriggle out of it. It was fifteen minutes past three when the man finally consented to put his signature to a document.

There remained for Mirjam seven quarter-hours until five o'clock. She went to the old house, to the child. But in the side-street, she met Kohl, the old cab-driver. He still wore his heavy pelerine, faded from many washings, although horse and cab and the time when he was capable of driving them had long since departed. And he was hard of hearing and put his questions slowly and distinctly and wanted his answers slow and distinct. He wanted to know this and that about the relief fund. And what would happen, if the Government went Communistic: would it supply every cab-driver with horse and wagon? And Mirjam had to explain, slowly and distinctly, so that she had only four quarter-hours left until five o'clock, when at last she stood before Frau Meier's door and rang the bell.

No one opened. Frau Meier had probably gone out. But the voices of children could be heard beyond the glass door. Mirjam knocked. Little feet came tripping along and a high voice said: "Auntie is not at home." Mirjam said: "It is I, child! It is I!" And she watched through the window-pane as the little one climbed upon a chair and opened the door for her.

The room was bright, the pine floor freshly scrubbed; at the window hung two cages with canary-birds, and along three walls eight little beds were arranged. Against the fourth wall stood a huge bedstead, piled high with comforters and pillows. A very long, very narrow table stood in the center of the room—dining-table, swaddling-table, table for everything. Besides Mirjam's son, who was now three years old, there were eleven other children: poor, tiny infants, with red, wrinkled old faces, cheated out of their waking hours by a contrivance of cheese-cloth, a sucking-bag, filled with some sort of herbs; one-year-old babies, weaklings who whimpered feebly; and the older ones, too old for the cribs, sliding here and there on their rosy little behinds, dragging the dirty white of this or that part of their clothing along the rough flooring of the room. Only four were able to walk, and Mirjam's child was the oldest.

When Mirjam entered the room, the bigger children—the two- and three-year-olds—were busy at a game. They had taken one of the tiny babies—it had a sucking-bag between its lips and lay in an alarmingly deep sleep—and put it into a box, a blue box without a cover, and this box two of the children were dragging like a sled or a wagon from a corner toward the table; four smaller ones followed, Indian-file, one walking, one crawling, and two sliding in a sitting posture. Mirjam stood at the door. Then, her boy, who was very delicate, very pale, very agile, with the reddish hair and the startled eyes of the Feuerbachs, pulled away from her hand and ran over to them, and now four of the wee tots lifted the box onto the table. Mirjam's child said: "Now, the candles!" Next to the huge bed stood an old-fashioned night-stand, which could be opened from below, and in which there were, besides some tin vessels and felt slippers, eight little tin candlesticks. In a little box were some candles. And the little creatures started to arrange them at the edge of the table in a circle, but Mirjam's child, who was the tallest, placed them in order. Mirjam was leaning against the door-post. "What are you doing there?" she asked, faintly. But her boy, a delicate flush on his cheeks, said: "Now, the matches!" At that moment, the baby in the box awakened and started to whimper feebly, and at the same moment, the door opened and the Meier woman entered: and at once the children ran, stumbled, crawled, slid back to their beds. The boy fled to Mirjam, where he felt himself safe against all danger. He whispered, explaining with confiding comradeship, almost giggling: "Auntie Meier whips us, when we play dead!" The child in the box cried loudly—once—and promptly fell asleep again.

The fat Meier woman was somewhat out of breath from climbing the stairs. She laughed harshly, when she saw Mirjam, and shook her hand. "Broke in, did you?" she said, loudly; she didn't like that. Mirjam said: "I want to pay, Frau Meier." But the Meier woman thought it necessary to explain to her: "I was only gone two minutes, over to Frau Gutjahr's. You know her, I think. She is afraid, that woman, that somebody will come. 'Who?' I ask her. She won't say. But she is afraid. Wants me to stay with her. Well, I have my fun. I say to her: 'Did you remember me in your will, Frau Gutjahr? I'd like to inherit the coffee service, Frau Gutjahr. What have you sewed in the mattress there, Frau Gutjahr? You can't pay your way into heaven, Frau Gutjahr!' " She guffawed, controlled herself, and said: "You should see her! She throws things at you. But when I start to leave, she whines: 'Stay here! Only two more minutes! Don't leave me alone!' " She laughed and laughed, and seated herself on a chair. Mirjam sat down next to the door. The boy stood at her side. She held his hand and said: "I want to pay you, Frau Meier." But the woman had not finished. She said: "Must be something wrong with her son, too—the crook! All at once, he has money. When he came to see her—the taxi had to wait for him outside. And now?" She leaned over to Mirjam and whispered: "Yesterday evening, he came sneaking in when it is already dark, and he slept in his mother's room, on the couch. And just now, while I was there, a man coughed in her little side-room. He is hiding!"

Mirjam lowered her eyes. How thin her boy's hands were! And there were shadows under his eyes. And his neck—no, the child hadn't been washed for a long time. "I'm going to pay you now, Frau Meier," said Mirjam, and then, very faintly: "A year in advance." The Meier woman suddenly paid close attention. Mirjam took out a carefully counted roll of bills and gave it to the woman. Oh, she had money, now. Badele had given it to her out of the treasury. Then, she took her child and lifted him on her lap, and said, hardly audibly: "Good-by, dear!" She had also brought a bag of candy, and the child was eating ravenously. His cheeks were full. The Meier woman had watchful eyes when she said:

"Listen! There was a girl—she had a child here. She comes to me and says: 'Here, Frau Meier, is money for four months in advance.' I say to her: 'Anna, don't be a fool! A decent girl doesn't jump into the water. A decent girl, when she gets in wrong—my God, anybody can have bad luck! What am I here for? I'll take you to a midwife. She'll fix it!' And to-day? To-day, she is married to a pork-butcher. And she wanted to jump into the water!" Mirjam smiled faintly, and said: "No, no! It is not that!" Frau Meier shrugged her shoulders and thrust the money into her capacious pocket. She seemed, in fact, anxious to turn the conversation into different channels. "Bad times!" she said. "Rafael is married. He's my son—I don't know if you know him. Married like a prince. Has his own business. I rent out his room, but only during the day. Oh, no, not to couples—don't think that! I could have done that a hundred times. I wouldn't do that! But Rafael said: 'Mother, friends of mine!' . . . I personally don't know them, don't see them, don't know anything about them. This evening, they'll come again. Occultists. Some kind of religion!" she chattered. Mirjam held the small hand in her own. The child had his cheeks full. Mirjam kissed the boy and rose. "Frau Meier—" she said, and started to go. For a long while, she held the door knob in her hand. The child had his cheeks full, and Frau Meier chattered. She closed her eyes to what she did not want to see. She said, but it could hardly be heard: "Be good—to—" Frau Meier talked and the child ate candy. Mirjam turned the knob. Already, the door was half open. Mirjam turned and, staggering a little, went across the small kitchen to the hall-door. Behind her, in the room, in the box on the table, something whimpered. Mirjam quickened her steps. It was a quarter to five.

In her room sat Ignaz Klein, waiting. Mirjam nodded to him, hung her coat and hat on the hook and seated herself cross-legged on the low divan that she had fashioned out of a sack of straw and a mattress and covered with a portière. It was comfortable and restful to sit there. Ignaz Klein, after the departure of his family, had wandered aimlessly around the park until a policeman—there were many of them, in those days—becoming suspicious, ordered him away. Ignaz Klein, grown old in three hours, sat there and said: "I have been to see my people!" Mirjam nodded. She was thinking that it would have been wise to demand a receipt of the Meier woman, and she said, carelessly: "Good! Your people. That's good!" Ignaz continued: "My people went back to Lemberg. Home. A relative sent money. They are in misery—oh, so miserable, miserable!" Mirjam thought: What is he saying? She thought: Receipt—what good? Who is there to control her? My child, my child! Mirjam nodded and said: "To Lemberg?" Ignaz stared into space and whispered: "I stayed. I stayed. An educated man!" Mirjam nodded and thought: My boy! How dirty he was! Ignaz cried out: "Why me? Why me?" And then Mirjam awoke out of her musings and looked at him attentively.

Ignaz said: "Look at my eyes, comrade! Near-sighted and clear-sighted, clear-sighted and near-sighted—that's how our eyes are." Mirjam thought: He won't be able to do it! She asked: "When are you going to do it, Ignaz?" He pounded his narrow chest and cried: "There—in there, I have already done it twelve times in the last twelve hours. Twelve times within the last twelve hours, I've lived through it. Twelve times I've been crushed under foot. Twelve times I've stood before the judge." Mirjam looked into his face; her lips moved. Poor devil! she thought. She asked: "When do you intend to do it? Don't think of it to-day. Do it tomorrow or the day after to-morrow." She thought: Tomorrow is another day. He knows nothing. To-morrow, he won't have to do it any more. Ignaz said: "Twelve times within the last twelve hours! Why me? Why me?" Mirjam said: "Listen to a sensible word, comrade. Don't do anything to-day. Go home and go to sleep!" One can't tell him anything, she thought. He's a poor devil and he's rattle-brained. She said: "To-night, you must sleep. Don't look for him. I know where Gutjahr is. He is staying with his mother, in the old house; he is hiding in her little room. Go there the day after to-morrow." To-morrow is another day, she thought, and the day after to-morrow he won't have to go; the day after to-morrow is another world! Ignaz nodded and said: "In the old house; in the old house with the old woman!" He smiled bitterly: "Suddenly, I am in the center of the stage. No one in the party would even spit at me before, and now I'm in the center of the stage!" Mirjam looked at him. Clear-sighted and near-sighted, she thought. Poor devil, she thought, and was silent.

She rose, went over to him, and said: "Wait until the day after to-morrow, do you hear?" She thought: My little boy! My child, oh, my little child! There was so much misery in the world. Here, some one sat and tortured himself without reason. Poor devil! she thought, and put her hand on his head. Ignaz trembled beneath her touch. He thought: Yes, now, they recognize me; now, they pay attention to me; now, I'm in the center of the stage! Now, she puts her hand on my head. (I have dandruff! he thought.) He said: "First, I'll say to him: Murderer! Traitor! Dog! Then, I'll shoot!" He is ridiculous! thought Mirjam. I am ridiculous! he thought, and blushed. Now, I live through it for the thirteenth time within twelve hours. She put her hand on my head! If I live through being crushed in advance, why should not I also have the thanks in advance? There should be thanks! She put her hand on my head—she, Mirjam! Does she like me? No, we are clear-sighted: she wants to be good to me, because she knows I'll be crushed in a few hours. She told me to be here at five o'clock—told me twice. The feast before the execution—it is ridiculous! The room is narrow, but there is something like a couch. They can't very easily look through the windows from the outside—she drew the curtains; she did that on purpose. Shall I lock the door? Don't tremble, now, of all times . . . only don't tremble!

Mirjam thought: Poor devil, poor devil! It would have been better to have asked Frau Meier for a receipt, poor devil yourself! Something embraced her, something with spectacles and crinkly hair. Something was feebly excited. Something kissed her. Oh, she was stronger. She clutched a throat! There, there lay a quivering bundle on the divan. He's gone crazy! My child, my little boy! thought Mirjam, and said gently: "Go home, comrade! Sleep!"

The bell. Two messages. "Urgent, Comrade Feuerbach!" They were orders, march orders, made out by Badele. They needed a second signature to become effective. She went to the little table at the window and signed calmly: 'F 82'—that was her mark. When she turned, Ignaz Klein was gone. But all this was soon forgotten. Of all this, she soon thought no more. Soon, she was swept along in the approaching storm.

ABOUT ten o'clock, a crowd of people stood at the rear entrance of the municipal lodging-house. The warder roared into the night: "Throw away your butts and get inside! In three minutes, I'll lock the door!" No one moved. Hardly any one spoke. Some one said, quietly: "Not a third of the cots will be taken to-night. Everybody's staying outside." On the opposite side of the street were thirty men in groups of twos and threes, walking up and down and pretending not to know each other. "Get in, now!" roared the warder. "What's the matter?" he asked one of them standing there. The answer came: "Two men have been murdered!" "Where?" "In Orth!" A few laughed. In the rear, a bow-legged fellow said: "Murdering the workingmen! They ought to be torn to pieces!" Dead silence. No one contradicted him. The warder shrugged his shoulders and closed the gates.

At that moment, a woman appeared at the opposite street corner—a woman without a hat. "These are the thirty, Comrade Feuerbach," said Jablonski. "Number 34 had to leave. Some plain-clothes men were here. He had to find out what was going on." The thirty promenaded up and down; one, a ragged fellow, juggled an iron bar between his fingers, as if it were a walking stick. He stepped up to Jablonski, bowed grotesquely and said in stilted German: "Would His Grace be so very kind and let me have a light for my imported Havana?" There was laughter. Jablonski said softly to Mirjam: "The women are already in the barracks. I mustn't forget to tell you. Why the women?" he asked, after a pause. "Day laborers," said Mirjam, briefly. Jablonski looked into her eyes and, with a warm gaze, as if he understood, said: "Then, I hope for the best, comrade!" She gave him her hand and he laughed boyishly. Then came 34, a war veteran with only half a face. He joined the two, without a word. "Well?" asked Jablonski. "They are looking for Anton Horak," the other said, cautiously. The Pole whistled softly through his teeth, and was very alert. "Under suspicion of murder," 34 said cautiously. Jablonski nodded and whispered: "Warsaw!" The man did not answer, and whistled a tune as some one passed by. Then, Jablonski breathed: "No! He was drinking, and bragged in his drunkenness. Said he had knocked off some profiteer." Mirjam became agitated. "Whom?" she asked. But he didn't know the name. Jablonski said: "One more! One more or less means nothing to Horak!" The half-faced veteran whispered: "You mean he kills his punks? I don't believe it! Just talk! Some even say he sells the flesh!" Jablonski said: "People know what they know! The truth will come out. Until now, he was on the good side of the police. But if he killed a rich man, they can't protect him, any more. They've got to go after him!" The half-faced man turned to Mirjam: "Oh, yes! The women! They are waiting for you, comrade. Jablonski will take you to them." He then joined the man with the iron bar and some others.

The Pole took Mirjam across three streets, through an empty warehouse and across the unlighted premises of flimsy hospital barracks, built during the war and now in ruins. Of most of the wooden shacks, there was nothing left but the cement foundations; everything else, not only doors and windows, but even the beams, had been stolen and carted off. A few were used as temporary storehouses: barrels of cement and building material lay there. And the one next to the last, Number 12, was almost empty. Mirjam and Jablonski had exchanged but a few words on the way. He carried the box with his marionettes. "I seldom make them perform nowadays," he said. "Only in the cafés and beer-shops, when I have orders to look for some one in there." He said no more. When they arrived, he stepped into the dimly lighted door and called into the place: "She is here!" From the inside came confused, indistinct voices of women. Mirjam remained standing with the Pole for a few minutes. "Well," he said, after a pause, "good luck to you!" Mirjam said, thoughtfully: "I don't know this neighborhood. What streets are those over there?" Jablonski pointed here and there at the jumbled silhouette of rows of houses and mentioned names. "I'll have to go to Schillerstrasse, later," said Mirjam. "With the women?" the Pole asked, in surprise. "They are going to look for work there," said Mirjam, briefly. The man gazed at her thoughtfully: "It will be best if you cross that empty lot into the side-street, over there. You'll pass Wiesnerstrasse, the old house—it's not more than five minutes from here." He paused and said slowly: "I'm still living there," and after a pause: "If there is anything I can do for you—" He was very serious. He nodded, left and was lost in the darkness. Mirjam stood alone and the wind caressed her brow. But when, suddenly, the voices in the barrack swelled in volume, she turned to the door in great confusion, brushed her hair back from her face and entered.

They had begun to quarrel. From the ceiling swung a kerosene lamp which threw off a dim circle of light. What lay beyond this, in the smell of fresh lumber and amid the clamor of many voices and the stuffy atmosphere of many unwashed bodies, was only a restless, pale yellow, losing itself in the blackness: Women, squatting, stretched out at full length, awake, asleep, huddled together on a pile of lumber, which, carelessly thrown in a heap, reached from the wall to nearly the center of the barracks. Here, they were noisily quarreling. On one of the pinnacles of the wretched estrade, behind a wall of resting women, stood a boy, perhaps twelve years old, with the body of an anemic child and the face of a consumptive old man. He was dressed in a man's carelessly shortened, ill-fitting suit; he slavered filthy epithets and putrid curses that fell like stink bombs down on an old woman standing below him. Before and alongside was stacked-up lumber. Planks had been placed across empty cement barrels and at these crude tables sat—oh, yes, they had chairs there!—a dozen females, fleshy arms propped on the board, who listened, encouraging the boy or shouting imprecations. The reason for the quarrel Mirjam never learned, for ten or fifteen other women came toward her from the right, advanced into the dim circle of light as she entered the door and, shouting and babbling and waving their arms, demanded that she employ her authority and make room for them over there on the lumber which the others had taken possession of. In the rear, a child whimpered and wailed—and suddenly there were many children, twenty perhaps, shoving, squeezing, pushing toward a dark corner—a comparatively quiet, playfully eager procession; a silent procession of bony, agile creatures with linen-white faces. Only to the left, in front, a dozen women sat calmly on chairs, hollow-eyed, hollow-cheeked women, somehow similar in appearance and somehow decayed looking. Toward these seated women, some one with three children stumbling around her feet pointed an accusing arm and screeched into Mirjam's face: "They over there have a place to sit! The whores have chairs, but not we!" One of the silent women turned her head and calmly spat an obscenity; what it was could not be heard. Only one was calm, actually calm,—a gentle woman with beautiful hair who, with two sleepy, heavy-eyed children, huddled on the bare earthen floor against the wall, where the others refused to remain.

There were shouts and screams all around her. Those on the planks were uncomfortable, but those on the floor were miserable. And those whose men had been left hanging on barbed wire somewhere and who now, along with their children, languished in want and misery, despised the old prostitutes seated over there. And the prostitutes despised these ragged women who had been so foolish as to bring a lot of brats into the world, just to see them starve to death. Shouts, curses, imprecations. Together with a few others, a strapping woman belligerently stepped up to Mirjam and demanded to know why they had been driven so early, this evening already, into this sty. Mirjam told them that the doors of the municipal lodging-house would be opened hours later than usual the next morning, and now the quarrelsome women hurled maledictions on the management of the lodging-house. The furious woman said: "As if we had time for their politics! We've got to slave until the blood bursts from our fingers! We want something to eat!" She showed them her hands, which were torn and scratched from hard labor. One of the prostitutes came over. She was a sickly, immaculately clean woman and asked Mirjam quietly: "Will this be hard work?" Mirjam said: "No, easy work, sister. City job. Mix mortar. Carry mortar." The pale woman nodded and slowly went back to her chair. "Easy work, sisters," said Mirjam once more, and it seemed to her as if her voice floated, alone and all too loud, through the place. "Easy work," she said for the third time, and her low voice shook.

By this time, they had all gone back to the pile of lumber. Mirjam brushed her hand across her eyes—for the fraction of a moment, she thought she saw Suvarov's face before her. He said—what did he say? No, a woman stood there, the gentle woman with the beautiful hair, and she asked—at the same time listening to the breathing of her two children, who lay asleep on the floor—"What will they pay us?" "Full wages," said Mirjam. "I have children," the woman smiled, as if in apology. "A bonus of flour and bread," said Mirjam. The woman said, gently: "My husband is dead, so I'll have to take them along." Quietly, she returned to her corner; she tiptoed and placed her finger on her lips, as though asking for silence. Around the cement barrels was laughter and singing.

Mirjam went to the door with heavy feet, and stared out into the night. One word she said, and she said it many, many times and did not know that she said it. "Child!" she whispered. The roof of the old house lay over there, somewhere in the darkness, so near and yet so far away. "To-morrow!" whispered Mirjam. From a church tower, the chimes announced midnight. "To-day!" whispered Mirjam, and then she said aloud, as though talking to some one at her side: "Now! Now! Now, it commences! Now, in a hall, some one in a black gown gets up and begins to read. The sentence!" Behind her, in the barracks, was noise. "The sentence!" whispered Mirjam. Behind her, in the barracks, a twelve-year-old boy, with the body of an anemic child in a man's ill-fitting suit, spat curses at an old woman. But the old woman did not hear him. She chanted into space: "Maybe they won't give me any work! Maybe I am too old for them! Always too old!" And one of the whores slowly turned her head to her neighbor and said: "Now, I am well again. I feel strong again, after that three months' rest in the hospital. I am going to start a new life!" And children were there, a procession of ghostly, agile children with linen-white faces—faces that were masks.

But out there was the night wind, and it came from afar, and bore the breath of sleeping hills on its wings: the breath of new-mown hay, the rustling of whispering leaves, the smell of the moor and the sleepy call of a lonely bird. Serene, fresh and cool as the earth itself, the wind passed over the weary city. Mirjam breathed deeply, drawing this invigorating and life-giving air into her lungs; breathed slowly, slowly, while she brushed her hand across her brows and eyes, as if she wished to brush away many things: as if she wished to unburden her mind of thoughts and happenings completely, and make them as if they had never been; and if an observer could have seen her in this darkness, he would have noticed that Mirjam had lost her very worldly, very knowing, sorrow-marked and life-loving expression in an almost exalted smile.

AND now the bells of the other towers of the city clanked the midnight hour, and I will never forget the high, whimpering sound that came from the jail church. Usually, we were asleep at this time—the lights were put out at fifteen minutes past eight. But we knew that this night would bring the verdict in the Orth trial, and we knew as much about the Orth trial as any one outside the jail—not only from the newspaper reports, for although we read newspapers, only those supporting the Government came into the place, and these by stealth. But every Sunday, at our noon mess, they gave us the *Christian Prisoners' News*, a weekly, published by the clergy and depicting a world without nether extremities. But no—we fared better than that, we seven hundred, sitting in our cages like so many canary-birds. My cage clung to the roof on the fifth floor, facing the street; and when I pulled myself up by the iron bars of my cell-window, I could look beyond the high outer wall and see what was happening on the sidewalk before the jail. They had kept me in the city jail and not taken me to the State penal institution. My twelve months were in reality only seven months plus five months—that was less than the limit. Yes, we fared better than the clerical paper, as far as the outside and the trial were concerned. There were, first of all, the newcomers; true, their cages were on the ground floor, four floors below, but the dividing wall went straight through to the roof and the kitchen chimney was there, and it was possible to knock against the tin rain-pipe with a spoon by reaching through the iron bars. And we all knew the Morse code as well as any telegrapher.

And so we were waiting in our bird-cages for the verdict in the Orth trial. Below, before the entrance to the jail, the street was black with people. Now, at midnight, there were at least a thousand standing there. I could only see heads, caps and hats. From below came a rumbling murmur. At times, the surf-foam of a whistle or a shrill shout splashed up to us. Then, all was quiet. In the next cell, No. 137, a soldier, rapped: "Attention!" Below, a spark of news leaped out of the gate into the black mass. Caps and hats, close together, were swirling around a central point. As though it had been nothing of importance, they moved apart sluggishly and growled dully. Like foam, whistles flew up to us—one, two, three, four. It was the signal. Downstairs, some one knocked: "The whistles were signals!" No. 137 rapped again, sharply: "Attention!" But when one put one's ear against the wall, not a sound was to be heard in the building. More and more black human brooks came flowing out of the side-streets into the lake before the gates. Like a polyp, the crowd sprawled there, immobile, its tentacles holding grimly to the corners of the building.

But when the gate was suddenly flung open and the real spark flew forth, there was, after all, only another surge, a squall and more foam: "Yeeeh!" and "Pfuiii!" At the same moment, the spark flew from cage to cage and the canary-birds on the five floors began to twitter and chirp. "Pfuiii!" they whistled below. And on the walls, they telegraphed with their spoons: "Acquitted!" But the spoons were not loud enough, so they telegraphed with their fists. Below were thirty caps, and they whistled. What were they whistling? Like foam on roaring surf, the march of the Revolution soared up. "The Internationale!" hammered 137, the soldier in the next cell, with his fist. Fists hammered. As that was not loud enough, we tramped the Morse code with our feet. The thirty caps below—like drops from a wave—fell away from the surf around the gate and ran. Whistles shrilled, and out of many throats came the cry: "Murderers! Murderers of working-men!" But then came the flat-caps and a crossbar closed the street. Feet tramped, and with tin pans they hammered it against the wall: "Police!" Below, they whistled the march of the Revolution. But there were too many police. They surrounded the place. The crowd was too small. We birds in our cages hammered against the walls. No. 137 telegraphed with his fists: "Out of here! Let us make a break! Out of here!" With his tin plate, he hammered it against the wall. Below, in strict tempo, thousands of lips whistled, whistled, whistled the march of the Revolution. In strict tempo, we hammered it against the wall. We roared it down to them on the street; into the city, into the night, we roared it. Some one howled the song and we howled with him, all of us. We shook our iron bars; we pulled ourselves up on them and howled the song, the melody, into the blackness. The city slept. Below were the police. But we in our cages—we howled. We in our cages—we boomed the tempo into the night. We in our cages, our hearts bursting for freedom, for liberty, our throats burning—we marched . . .

THE CRY

THE night that saw the entanglement of the threads on which the world hung; the night in which knots were tied and knots were severed and when so much time was piled up and so many strands of time were braided together that in a few dark hours one experienced a whole lifetime—that was the night between the 14th and the 15th of July.

Ruben slept until evening, when his mother roused him. "Late!" she said. He went to the old house, where he had gathered around him, when he had come out of jail, those who had become his followers because he had taken their guilt upon himself. "All guilt will he take upon himself; the guilt of all mankind he will take upon himself!" they said. They went to meet him in the room of Rafael Meier. His mother went along with him. "Going visiting!" she said, gazing past him. She pulled the shawl about her shoulders. Before they left her tiny apartment, she once more gazed down on the courtyard, at the lamp-post standing beneath her kitchen window. "The lamp-post is a spy! She put it there!" she whispered, and with her fingers she brushed thoughts from her brow, from her eyes. The mild night crooned gently about Ruben's hair and temples. There were starlight and lamplight. They flowed down over his eye-lashes and over his hands, as he set foot before foot. At his side, the old woman walked and her lips moved. "Mirjam did not come," she said, sternly. Silence. "Going visiting!" she whispered, and pulled the shawl about her. Ruben did not hear her.

When they came to the old house and stood in the large courtyard, he turned to the left and climbed the stairway in the corner of the rear- and side-house to Frau Meier's apartment. Frau Feuerbach went straight ahead to the Gutjahr woman. The light on the stairway had already been extinguished. The old woman groped her way from step to step, and her lips moved. She knew the door: on the second floor, the third to the right. Pale light crept through the cracks into the darkness. She did not knock; she turned the knob and entered. Over there, in the hollow of her mattress, Frau Gutjahr sat, stiffly erect. "You!" she exclaimed, tonelessly. There it was, the thing she had been waiting for; she wanted to scream. But Frau Feuerbach seated herself in a chair at the head of the bed. "Visit!" she said—a simple declaration, inexorable, leaving no room for argument. The other woman, transfixed, stared at her lips. She wanted to scream; she wanted to say something to impose timidity upon her late visitor: I am not alone, many people go in and out of here; at any moment, some one may come; don't you dare; take care! Instead, she said: "I always have visitors. Frau Meier will soon be here. And Calé is coming. And my son is coming." Slowly, Frau Feuerbach rose, unsmilingly, a lifeless doll, a thing of clock-work. She went to the little room adjacent and looked in. "Nobody!" she said, and seated herself on her chair at the head of the lame woman's bed.

Frau Gutjahr wanted to scream. But she chattered, flinging bridges of words across the abysmal solitude. "The police were here two hours ago, looking for Anton Horak. 'Why?' I asked. He killed somebody. 'Whom?' I asked. The hound roared at me: 'Keep your mouth shut! Very likely, you know that better than we! We'll come after you next!' he roared. Me—a poor, lame woman, half dead. Any dog would have pity on me—isn't that so?" Rigid, a lifeless doll, Frau Feuerbach sat on her chair. "Isn't that so?" Frau Gutjahr asked once more, in a quavering voice. Frau Feuerbach was silent. Once more, Frau Gutjahr wanted to scream, and hastened to fling bridges across the solitude. "An hour ago," she said, "an hour ago, some one comes looking for my son—a gentleman with a head as round as a bullet. 'Herr Gutjahr!' he says. He is not here, I insist. He says: 'I have been looking for him for the last four days, now. He is not at home, so he is hiding and he must be here!' 'He is not here,' I say, 'and I know nothing about his business.' 'Not business!' he says, and twitches: 'Not business! We have to settle something; I want him to give me something; I want to buy something from him. I've been looking for him four days!' He twitches. I say: 'He is not here; maybe he is downstairs. Do you know, mister, where Anton is?' But already he is gone." The woman at the head of her bed sat sternly on her chair and looked into space. "He will come again at any minute!" the Gutjahr woman said. Oh, what a poor creature I am, what a forsaken dog I am! she thought. "Any moment!" she chatted on once more. Then, she started and grew rigid, for she had heard footsteps on the stairs.

Meanwhile, Ruben was saying, over in the room where they sat against the wall, Kurila and Wurmbrand and the nodding seven and the three from the Salvation Army and others whose faces were not in the light-circle of the kerosene lamp—Ruben was saying, with the Bible open before him: "One I see. In anger, he has gone away from a woman. And because he left in anger, he will be humbled." "What is his name?" quavered a woman's voice. Ruben said: "His name is Man-Man." Then, they were silent.

This was at the time when Frau Gutjahr heard Ignaz Klein's footsteps on the stairs. He had left Mirjam in anger, and in his anger's loneliness he raised his hand against himself, accusing and sentencing himself. Quickly now! he said—after hours of self-torture, the sun had burned itself out and night had fallen— Quickly now! he said, while you are still walking like a man and before you grovel like a whining dog!—Quickly now on your way, and have an end to it! Mirjam said: "Wait until to-morrow; live until to-morrow." To-day, now, put an end to it! And so he came in the night, revolver in his pocket, up the dark stairs. Shoot him down before the eyes of his mother! Why not before the eyes of his mother? On the second floor, to the right, the third door. Light crept through the cracks. He pushed the door open and found, instead of him for whom he was looking, two women, one of whom was sitting stiffly in a chair. The other refused to let him go. Stay! He must stay! A cup of coffee, hot from the stove. No, no, he must not go! Just a little chat. No, he didn't have to chat. If he preferred, he could keep quiet or brood, in God's name, like that stone-woman at the head of the bed. Thus, the lame woman chattered, and would not let him go. The terror of the lame woman sunk its claws into his loneliness and would not let him go. Coffee! There was hot coffee on the stove!

At this moment, Gutjahr was no longer asleep in Anton's room. Having fallen asleep after four nights' flight, after four days' hiding from the world, he was now awake. He had fallen asleep in the room of his friend-enemy, the man-beast, the slave who had power over him: the power of mutual knowledge, a knowledge that could rise against him—perhaps had already risen against him. After the meeting in "The Goulash" in the early dawn, Gutjahr had accompanied Anton to his room, to subdue the dangerous accomplice once more, if possible. He had locked the door, had seated himself on Anton's bed and had talked until, five minutes later, he had fallen over on his side, fast asleep, exhausted after his four days' flight. He will choke me to death!—the thought flitted through his brain. But the bed was soft and his lids were leaden. Keep awake! he commanded himself. But he fell asleep, just the same. . . .

He had awakened with a start; but that was some time ago. It was dark. Anton was not with him. In the open door stood some one with a candle that wavered and blinded. He squinted. The man with the bullet head, the man in evening clothes, stood there. He said: "Here you are!" Gutjahr jumped from the bed toward the door, but the other, twitching awkwardly, was quicker than he and locked it. "Easy!" he said, and laughed lightly. (This was at the time when Ignaz Klein was climbing the dark stairs to look for Gutjahr in his mother's room.) "Easy!" said the man with the bullet head, in a blustering voice that contrasted ludicrously with the noticeable trembling of his hands. He was holding the bowler in his left and the burning candle in his right hand. He said, gruffly: "Easy, now! Now, I've got you! Scoundrel! Four nights I've been looking for you, scoundrel! Now, give me the cocaine. Here is money." All this he said sternly, but his eyes, his small, blankly glittering, water-pebble eyes, were the eyes of a mendicant; dog's eyes, pleading for forgiveness for the harsh words that came so daringly from his twitching lips. "Easy!" twitched the lips. "Now, give me the cocaine, or I'll go to the police! You've ruined me! I was a healthy man before." "That is why," said Gutjahr, and looked him in the eye, "that is why there is no more for you!"

The little, glittering eyes widened. The bullet head fell obliquely over his shirt-front and grinned mockingly. The hand with the bowler waved forward and the man screeched: "No more! No more!" He laughed as an owl laughs, quick, quick, quick. "No more now!" he laughed. "I won't even reply to that! Listen, you scoundrel!—" His eyes pleaded. "Listen! If you don't pull the little package of coke out of your vest pocket—but the genuine, unadulterated stuff; no gypsum, you hear!—do you know what will happen? Here, right here, I will shoot myself! And my landlady has a letter for the police, and she'll send it to-night. Everything is in that letter. And they'll hang you!" Gutjahr sneered into his face: "Cyanide is what you should have!" He was tired. He had other worries. Bothering him with these silly, petty things! He had no cocaine with him. He was no match for all this. The little, glittering eyes had altered their expression; roguishly, dreadfully roguishly, they looked at him. The mouth opened wide and twitched and pleaded: "Two grams! Only two grams!" And a hollow hand trembled before his eyes.

This was the time when the Gutjahr woman upstairs said to Ignaz Klein: "Don't go! There is coffee on the stove!" Ignaz stared beyond the paralyzed woman through the window into the dark night. In the darkness, on the other side of the fence, stood Anton. He knew that they were out looking for him. The front gate was closed. The gatekeeper was very friendly with the police—he had to climb this fence, if he wanted to get into the courtyard. In the darkness, examining the fence, Anton strolled along the side-street.

And at the same time, Ruben raised his white forehead in the lamp-light and said: "One is there who tortures himself. He looks into blackness. He looks through blackness. He carries a candle. The candle wavers and burns with a black flame. He raises a hollow hand and says: 'Give!' " "What is his name?" asked Kurila, in the semi-darkness. Ruben lowered his forehead and said softly: "His name is Man-Man. And there is one who refuses him and taunts him and refuses him and says 'No!' His name is Man-Man." One of the nodding seven began to weep gently. The lamp sang.

Somewhere in the old house, this happened: The Gutjahr woman said: "Coffee! Have some coffee!" But Ignaz rose abruptly and grew pale. "I am going, now!" he said, harshly, took his hat and hesitated. Frau Feuerbach, a statue, sat on her chair and did not move. He hesitated, suddenly pulled himself together and stumbled into the dark corridor and down the stairs. When he stepped into the silent court, he heard a bell strike midnight (it was the same that Mirjam—standing in the barracks door—heard) and a little later, from a great distance, and only audible on account of the vast silence that lay for a moment over the city, as though the new day's first heart-beat and first breath were hesitating—from a great distance, eery, came the confused sound of many shouting voices. It must be around the jail, thought Ignaz. But he gave it little thought, and turned toward Anton's quarters. Simultaneously, a man climbed over the fence; Ignaz did not notice him, but the other saw Ignaz—saw some one bound for his room—and hid himself in the shadows of the dark staircase leading up to the apartment of Fräulein Calé.

At this time, Frau Feuerbach rose from her chair and went to the adjoining room. She looked through the door and said: "Nobody!" The Gutjahr woman—she had not been well the last few days, paralysis having begun to creep into her arms—asked: "What are you doing?" Frau Feuerbach went to the door leading into the hall. "What are you doing?" asked the Gutjahr woman, and her voice shook. Stern of face, Frau Feuerbach turned the key in the lock. "What are you doing?" whispered the Gutjahr woman, and suddenly felt faint. But the other, undisturbed, went back to her chair at the head of the bed, seated herself and sat rigid. Only thoughts, thoughts, she brushed from her brow.

At the same time, Gutjahr, downstairs, sprang, tiger-like, out of Anton's chamber into the front-room with the many empty cots, slammed the door and locked it. The bullet head, caught inside, outwitted, raved and clamored. He scratched on the wood. Then, he was quiet. Then, he scratched again. Then, he whined. Breathing heavily, alone in the deserted cellar, Gutjahr leaned his back against the barred door of the cage and laughed. He neighed. He was exhausted from laughing, when he seated himself on one of the cots. "Finished!" he said, into the darkness. He had been afraid. He had money in three banks, now—naturally, under fictitious names. He thought: If I get clear of this, I'll buy that little country estate on the Westbahn. Only this time, once more, let me get clear! He was not the same since he wore hat and gloves. He was afraid. "I'll give him cyanide!" he said, aloud. He sat on the cot, and inside the bullet head scratched on the wood and babbled incoherently. Gutjahr knew that he would not give him cyanide. He was a different man, now. On the wood of the door inside scratched Yesterday and would not let him go.

At the same time, Anton was slinking in the court along the front-house. It was a quiet evening in Calé's apartment; the windows blinked sleepily, with a light only here and there. There was light in Rafael Meier's former room, and a lamp was burning in Frau Gutjahr's room. Anton slunk to the left, up the stairway leading to Frau Meier's and on up to the attic door. Pitch blackness lay beyond the entrance. Anton entered and was drowned in the darkness.

At the same time, Ignaz, having reached the basement, opened the door and stood in the night-lodging with the empty cots. From the ceiling swung a solitary bulb, enclosed in wire-netting. He saw the room, heard some one scratching and babbling behind Anton's door, and on one of the cots saw Gutjahr himself. Streams of fire flew from Ignaz's eyes. Out of Ignaz some one screamed: "Dog! Traitor!" He reached into his pocket, pulled a revolver and screamed: "Warsaw! For Warsaw!" Gutjahr understood. He had jumped up from his cot. He grew pale—yes, Gutjahr grew pale. He did not jump at Ignaz. He did not batter him down. He was afraid. Don't shoot! he wanted to say. He had money in the bank. He wanted to buy himself a country place. His lips moved, but no sound came forth. Ignaz raised his hand, a feeble, wavering Jew's hand, and took aim. Now! he said to himself. It is easy, now! Now, it has to be!

The eternity hanging between the muzzle of the revolver and his face lasted no more than half a second. The other half of the second brought this: The bullet head inside had listened at the door. The bullet head understood. The bullet head threw himself against the door until it cracked, and he roared: "Shoot!" Roared and laughed: "Shoot him down! Shoot him! Yes! Yes! Yes! Shoot him down, like a dog!" Laughed and hurled himself, hurled himself, hurled himself, raving, with triumphant, clucking laughter, against the wood.

All this happened in the other half of the second. But in the next second, Gutjahr, whipped by the other's frenzy, jumped across two cots at Ignaz Klein, knocked the gun out of his hand, reached the stairs, the outer door, yanked it open and threw himself out into the windy night. Simultaneously, the raving man had broken through the door, swept like a driving whirlwind, like a mad nightmare, convulsed by clucking laughter, like a triumphant pursuer swinging a thousand scourges, across the room, up the stairs after the fleeing man and out into the courtyard and the night. Only one remained, some one who was awkwardly retrieving a revolver from beneath one of the cots. Some one mechanically brushing the dirt from his sleeve and looking fixedly at his shoe, as though expecting to find something there. Then, slowly, he went up the steps; slowly, he went outside: went, crooked of shoulder, near-sighted and heavy-soled, in a circle across the courtyard and dived off somewhere into the blackness.

This was at the time when Ruben, upstairs, lifted his face into the light and said: "I see some one who is running away. Running away from himself. Some one is pursuing him and does not know: should he find him in the darkness, he would find himself. One is in despair; he comes up the stairs and he will enter. His name is Man-Man." He broke off and turned his face toward the door. The others also turned their faces and waited, but no one entered. Breathless silence. But the silence was not silent enough and did not reach far enough, so that they could hear: some one was actually coming up the stairs. It was Ignaz. On the stair-landing of the second floor, he saw the door to Frau Meier's apartment, the lighted glass door of the kitchen, standing ajar. Ruben, Ruben's friends! he thought. Once more, I shall look into his face! he said to himself. He stepped closer—something urged him to be quiet.

But at that moment, he saw a man in there, and started back. In there, in the lighted kitchen, bent forward, crouching like a beast of prey, eye and ear at the keyhole of the closed door of the adjoining room, listening, scenting, brutally alert—there stood Anton, tense and waiting. Ignaz Klein turned. Ignaz Klein screamed, screamed without a sound, raced up the stairs—now, put an end to it, quick!—reached the open door of the attic and sped, crooked of shoulder and insignificant—a rat—further, further, far, far beneath the unlighted rafters.

This was at the moment when Ruben turned his expectant face away from the door, bent his head in sadness and said: "No one comes!" They were silent. Only one of the nodding seven placed his arm around another's shoulders and—drifting—was lost. Then, a slight unrest came over all those sitting along the wall, as when the leaves of a beech tree rustle and whisper in a sudden breath of air. They moved closer, closer together. They formed a circle about the table—a wall, shutting in the light. Behind them, in the corners, lurked darkness. Only one did not join them, and when they had taken their places and were once more silent, they could hear his regular breathing. Some one, stretched out on three chairs, had fallen asleep. Wurmbrand went over to him—Wurmbrand, with his narrow, twitching shoulders that gave one the impression that he was ready to burst into laughter—went over and looked into his face. Then, he turned back to the circle of light and put his finger, oddly roguish, to his lips, and said: "He is asleep!" The sleeper had shoved a flat, wooden box under his head as a pillow. And the ones around the table from now on spoke only in cautious whispers.

What they discussed was of little importance. A woman with deep hollows in her cheeks (she was consumptive) read an excerpt of the Song of Solomon; and the description of the nuptial bliss—the woman read in a dry, low, monotonous voice—excited Kurila; she moved still closer to the table (her thin face was flushed rosily beneath her white hair) and in palsied agitation, Fräulein Kurila—rags around her feet—held a discourse, at great length, almost bitter in her exaltation, on the verses just read. But for some reason of insignificant importance, she was opposed by the three from the Salvation Army, by the old man with the cap and the young man with the cap and by the girl in the old-fashioned, charmingly severe Army bonnet. And so it came about that soon these heavy-laden and troubled outcasts were arguing and quarreling about the bride of Zion and the future blessings of the next world. "They shall walk in song," said one whose fingers were withered. "They shall sip the morning dew," said one who had been imprisoned innocently for ten years. There were seven who nodded. Their eyes turned this way and that way, and they nodded and looked at each other with large, serious, glowing eyes. Only the haggard woman, the one who had been reading, coughed until she was exhausted: and it was plainly heard by all, for they talked, if not actually in whispers, in undertones . . . The old man was still fast asleep on his three chairs. But when the argument was about exhausted and the exaltation glowed dimmer, like aged pewter, some one said: "Ruben!" And "Ruben!" they all repeated, and they turned their anxious eyes toward him.

Unconscious of his surroundings, the youth sat in the center of the sofa before the table on which stood the lamp and, beneath the lamp, the open Bible. He sat there, his white face sunk forward, and did not look up. The lids had fallen over his eyes and, if one would have looked closely, one would have seen that they were quivering. And suddenly, there was not a sound in the room. Only the sleeper in the corner breathed easily. It was Kurila who rose, slowly, feebly, and with a wide, soft gesture (bats' wings flutter like that) said into the circle: "Quiet! He is not with us!"

What ensued happened much more rapidly than it can be related. Ruben's face, aureoled in the lamplight, was frozen into the mobile rigidity of streams flowing beneath green, transparent ice. So clear and yet so obscure, with a stirring and horribly charming corpse-like vivacity, the abstracted youth drifted through Time. And from his lips fluttered a curious continuity, bits of life, past, decayed, unwitnessed, bits and bits of bits, as if torn apart by a phantom cyclone. "If she finds the matches!" he said. "If only she doesn't find the matches!" And after a deep, deep sigh, as though a heavy burden lay on his heart: "Then—fire!" There was silence. An abyss yawned. (Only the sleeper breathed.) Into the silence, Ruben babbled, and his mouth was old: "Cats! Cats! The cats!" Before him, leaning against the table, stood Kurila. She trembled so violently that the glass shade of the lamp started to tinkle softly, with an evil, high, monotonous tinkle that crept up the spine of the wretches sitting there with horror-widened eyes and stabbed into their brains. Kurila said, with difficulty: "Is—some one there?" And Ruben's mouth opened, and an unspeakable something, out of chasms, out of the ether-blackness from beyond the stars, rattled in his throat: "Ackermann! Ackermann—of Trieste!" The old woman still leaned against the table with the tinkling lamp, and suddenly she also sighed, as if rocks of black air were pressing down on her lonely, fluttering heart. Her head with its smooth white hair drooped aslant. Across the lamp shade, she stared fixedly into Ruben's face. She opened her lips to utter another question.

But before she could force the first syllable from her throat, she froze and became all eyes. The ice in Ruben's face suddenly began to move—floes telescope like that before they burst, jaggedly glaring, amid crashes—and suddenly, as if some one were pulling him by strings, as if some one were tearing apart his lips, this glass-face, this ice-face, actually burst and the mouth, the red mouth, gaped horribly. The tongue quivered. "Not the matches! Not the matches!" it screamed. "The money!" it screamed. "Give her money! Tear open the mattress and give her money! But she must not find the matches!" The voice grew quiet and heavy. "Otherwise—fire!" it said. And suddenly, it was Ruben once more, his eye-lids quivering, who said in a low voice: "Oh—much is there! Much lies there! Much must be carried away! There is not a wall in the house. Glass walls. Behind rooms, rooms. Behind beds, beds. Beyond—roaring blackness." It seemed as though he were gazing fixedly at something—he even raised his head—and suddenly the lids sprang up from his eyes, suddenly he was wide awake, suddenly he screamed in his own voice into the semi-darkness of the corner, screamed through bare walls into space: "Not the matches! Tear open the mattress!" And now it was as if—rushing, flowing, bubbling—a hundred words sprang simultaneously, chasing each other, fleeing, out of his throat into the yawning reality: "Tear open the mattress! The door is locked! Why won't she talk? Offer her money—perhaps she'll spare you. You took her money—offer her money! Why does she walk about in a circle? Matches! No, no, no, no! She can't find them! Offer her money! Tear open the mattress under you—clink the money! Perhaps she'll go away! Did she find the matches? Scream! Scream! Scream! What is burning? Offer her money! Not the flame—no! Clink, clink, clink some money before her! Not the mattress—" He stopped abruptly. He stared through the wall. "Aiiii!" he screeched, suddenly, raised his arms high above his head and threw himself across the table. The lamp rocked to and fro and suddenly went out. Over the room, over the livid silence, on the livid faces, lay a vivid brightness gleaming through the window. Wurmbrand and the young man from the Salvation Army staggered to the window and threw it open.

Over in the rear-house, out of the window of Frau Gutjahr's room, swept a mighty, yellowish-white flame high up to the roof. It was so indescribably quiet in these first moments that nothing could be heard but a disconnected, lonely crackling and the faint, high-pitched moaning of the flame. Only much later, centuries later, the first screams burst forth.

THIS was the flame I saw from the roof of the jail. Beyond the darkness, it raised its head and barked at the night. I pointed to it and said: "Fire!" "Let it burn!" said 137, the soldier, still lying flat on his belly and listening through the hatch into the building. Soon, he rose and came over to me. "Let it burn!" he said once more, and then he chuckled again, as he had chuckled the entire time, as we slunk and scurried along Corridor IV and up the stairs to the loft, with its rows upon rows of filed legal documents. He was endlessly amused at memory of the ludicrous episode when he had swung the tin tankard from behind and floored the guard, as he inspected the cells after the outburst. It had stuck upon his head like a helmet, and the man had fallen to the floor like a steer under the ax. He chuckled and said: "Let it burn!" And then, we stood for a moment at the edge of the roof—where, far below, the dark street yawned like a gorge; to the right, to the left, a confusion of house-tops lost itself in the distance—we stood there and watched a flame crawl along the eaves of a building and spread. "That's a bad one!" said the soldier. "It must be an old house." I said: "I know those houses over there. That fire isn't far away!" He said: "Then, let's get down and go over there. We need different clothes. Once, at a fire—" He broke off and cautiously went ahead. I followed him over the flat roof of the prison house. It was a tiled roof; it was easy going across tile; only at the edge, near the gutter, where the tin plates lay, one had to be careful. Every step made a noise and more than one jail-breaker had lost his foothold here and taken a dive into the street. "Careful!" said 137. The shingles of the next house were nine feet below us. We lowered ourselves, one hanging from the other's hands. After that, we had but little difficulty: a dormer-window was open, an old door yielded easily to a little pressure; we crept down an echoing staircase, a glass door, a courtyard, a garage. (A dirty, old, blue smock hung there, which I took; No. 137 threw away his jail jacket and stood there, athletic, in a ragged undershirt and an old cap which he had found.) At last, the street. The fire was drawing people out of the houses. We slunk out of sight. "To the fire!" said 137. We ran. But all this must have taken half an hour—a long time, for a house with flames behind its windows.

Presently, we found ourselves before the old house. The side-street was filled with people, mostly women and children, agreeably frightened, amused and excited, kept in check by three or four policemen. The men, night-owls, night-faces, but also working-men and many street-car conductors, had disregarded the orders of the police and invaded the street itself, which by now was filled with them and half-grown boys, a huge, black crowd, split in two by the arrival of the fire-engines, a long row of which was standing before the wide open gate. A web of tightly stretched hose ran through the archway: gigantic throats, swallowing convulsively under the force of the pumps—here and there, a tiny water-spout squirted up through a leaky connection or a rent in the rubber. Across these tubes was a continuous hastening back and forth, from the street to the courtyard and from the court to the street—unhindered, for, oddly enough, there were, aside from the three in the side-street, no policemen about. (There must be no police in the street until absolutely necessary; a Government order had been given out for this night, aiming at something else.) "No police!" said one of the tenants, taking me, perhaps on account of my dirty smock, for one of the engineers. "No police—and the whole damned crowd from the street will be in the courtyard!"

And there were actually about two hundred people huddled together in a corner near Calé's stairway, comparatively quiet, their startled faces now flooded, now thrown into sudden dimness by the flickering fire which now embraced the entire rear-rouse in a terrifying crackle—much woodwork was in the building, decayed beams, dry as cinders from the summer heat, against which the streams of water hissed without producing noticeable result. A shoemaker who lived in the rear-house, and whose wretched belongings lay around the courtyard, told any one who would listen that the conflagration had undoubtedly started in the little apartment of the sewing woman next to Frau Gutjahr or—but this seemed less likely—in Frau Gutjahr's place. "While it was still possible to get up the stairs," he continued, "Jablonski rushed in. But Frau Gutjahr's door was locked from the inside. He called. No one answered. There was only the crackling of the fire to be heard. He came down to get an ax. But he could not go back a second time: the fire had already spread up the stairs." "What did he say? What is it?" some one asked, thrusting his head into the circle. "Nothing," some one answered. "The Gutjahr woman up there burned to death." "Who? Jablonski?" some one further away inquired. "The one with a streak of white in his hair?" asked a woman, and continued: "He is alive. He is over there in the side-house. There are supposed to be some children there, in the second floor, where the smoke curls out of the window."

"The firemen!" said another woman. It seemed as though the chief were changing his tactics. They abandoned the rear-house and turned the hose against the roof of the side-house, which the fire had thus far hardly touched. Only in the corner, where it joined the abandoned rear-house, some beams were smoldering and smoke hovered behind a few windows and especially in the opening of the stairway leading up to Frau Meier's. There, in front of the entrance, in close proximity to the conflagration, despite the cursing of the harassed firemen, stood ten or fifteen people and coughed into the smoke. I went over. "Jablonski is up there with the children," some one said, and pointed to the stairs, where tiny flames already danced behind thick layers of black smoke. "He can't get down any more! Just now, we heard him shout." And they stood and listened into the crackle and the hissing steam of the water. "Twenty children," said some one. They listened. "She ought to be hung, the fat slob, the baby-killer, for running away like that!" said a bow-legged cripple whom I had seen before, years ago, perhaps at the lodging place. The fifteen were silent and listened. "There!" some one shouted. On the stairs up there, invisible behind hissing steam and crackling flames, a voice—a roar. A powerful voice roared some words, apparently always the same four or five words, unintelligibly. The fifteen listened. "There is also a woman up there!" said some one. "Many women!" some one else assured them. "No, they are all back there," said the first speaker, pointing to the corner of Fräulein Calé's staircase. Only now, I noticed that the door to the stairs stood open and thirty or fifty women and children were camping there—yes, camping, as though they had settled there for the night and not to watch the fire. And just then, a couple of stern-faced square-toes accosted the fifteen before the entrance where I stood and asked if any one knew a certain Anton Horak and when they had seen him last, whereupon I quickly slipped away and lost myself in the big crowd.

But I did not get as far as the women on the stairs, for there were others, about twenty of them, men and women, wretched creatures, who scurried hither and thither as though searching for some one. "No, not here!" said a white-haired old woman. "Not here!" Her feet were wrapped in rags; I knew her, but could not remember her name. But the man over there, next to the one with the Salvation Army cap, looking helplessly about him, perplexed and fearful, was surely Wurmbrand. With graceful gestures, he recited: "After the last had left the room and flames were already shooting out of the window over there, he still lingered behind. 'Ruben!' I said to him. 'Ruben, come with me! Ruben!' In the corridor, I still called: 'Ruben!' He was standing in the kitchen door and was speaking in whispers with a man who must have been waiting for him. I know him; he is an evil man. He is a meat peddler." "Horak?" asked one of the few who were listening to him. "Anton Horak? Man! Then, you claim the reward—" The rafters of the rear-house crackled and a sheaf of sparks sprang up into the night air. "They were looking for him, just now," he concluded. Above me, out of the window, leaned Calé, her hair disheveled, in silken negligee, a nightmare—leaned far out to a group of onlookers, pointed obliquely toward the stairway in the corner of the rear- and side-house—smoke poured out of the opening —and screeched: "In there! The redhead! Mirjam! She came with those filthy women and ran into the fire!" She snickered: "The Pole ran after her!" For a moment, the fat face of Frau Meier appeared over her shoulder. Wurmbrand continued: "I confess, I was curious. I stepped closer in the darkness of the corridor, in order to hear what was being said." He kept on talking.

What he knew and what he did not know of that meeting between Ruben and Anton in there, was this: Ruben said to Anton: "You are looking for me?" Anton replied, and his eyes gazed past Ruben: "They all look for you! They all ask for you! They all confess to you!" And he continued, in a whisper: "I, too, am burdened!" Ruben looked into his face and grew very pale. His eyes flitted to the exit, and for a moment it seemed as though he were tempted to run. But then, he had found his feeble strength once more, and he raised his hand and said: "One must be prepared! I am ready. You want to speak, Man-Man. Speak!" The lumpish brute cowered beneath his gaze, but slowly a gleam came into the depths of his eyes and alertly he scanned his surroundings and, cautiously gliding, he shoved his beast-body into the deserted room of Rafael Meier and turned and called back to Ruben: "Confess, yes! Here, it is quiet. There is no one here." And it was no human voice that continued: "Come in! Here! Come in!" "One must be prepared!" said Ruben softly, white-lipped, and followed him into the room.

Anton turned the key in the lock. His eyes roved past the slender youth, and he said, in a dull voice: "Alone! We two! Not a soul is in the house any more!" Only the reflection of the flames lighted the room. And in this uncertain light, Ruben stepped up close to Anton, so feebly strong that the terror lurking in one corner of his heart almost died out. And he placed his hand on Anton's arm, and he said, with bloodless lips: "Yes, we two alone! Say, Man-Man, what you have to say!" With a sudden jerk of his shoulder, Anton threw Ruben's hand from his arm. "Don't do that!" he said, chokingly. His feet groped through the room and he seated himself in a far corner, his face in darkness. Across the room—in the courtyard below, they shouted in the light of the flames—across the room, he said: "What do you want to hear? Every mortal sin you shall hear!" Ruben also seated himself, between door and window, so that his face was in the uncertain light and, stiffly erect, his hands on his knees, he sat and listened. Silence.

And then, out of the dark corner, came the voice: "When those fellows began coming to me, it was in the war and there were no women anywhere. I was in jail, on account of the pope of Strij. He had a pig hidden away somewhere. Give it to me! I said. He wouldn't do it—and it was war. While I was in jail for manslaughter—in the military prison in Cracow—there was a fellow from the 64th Reserves. He knew me from Mielec, where we made free with those Jewish women who hung themselves afterwards. In Cracow—yes! He always crawled into my bunk. That was the beginning. But those were not boys, like the ones after the amnesty, when we went into the houses again and commandeered what we wanted. They always came to me. And then—and then, it started . . ." The voice died out, the voice revived and came out of the darkness: "Then, it started—the—blood!" It was so quiet in the room that the howling of the flames could be heard. Then—out of the darkness—the voice: "I didn't want to! I didn't want to kill anybody! But they kept on coming of their own accord. 'Go!' I said. 'Get out! Get out! When it comes over me again, something will happen' . . . Didn't I know! I cried—yes, I cried, with bitter tears: 'Don't make me wild! Don't always make me wild!' When I got wild—we wrestled for hours. Then—slowly—slowly—I would get more wild. There were always more, always more, always more. And I think to myself: God! God! Where will this end? The faces!" The voice died away, and the flames roared into the silence.

The voice came to life again and babbled out of the darkness across the room: "When they got weak, I threw myself on them with my whole body—choked them, strangled them—bit through their throats!" That died away in a monotonous babble, and the flames howled through the silence. Ruben whispered, and his voice trembled: "And—then?" "When one of them was dead—when I came to myself—coffee! Yes! Then, I made myself some black coffee. The dead one I put on the floor. I put a towel over his face." That died away, babbled monotonously: "With a towel over the face, it can't look at you!" For a moment, there was silence. Then, a red paw came waving out of the blackness of the corner—a paw waved negation, a voice flared up and cackled: "But that about the meat isn't true! It isn't true that I ate the flesh!" The voice cracked. The flames roared into the silence.

Ruben rose with difficulty from his chair; he trembled, and breathed in a faltering voice: "And—then?" No answer came. Ruben placed foot before foot and went across the room. The Thing cowered in its chair in the darkness and did not move. "And—then?" breathed Ruben, and raised a shaking arm and placed, trembling and feebly strong, a shaking hand upon the shoulder of the crouching man. And then the man looked up. "Go away!" he said, and buried his nails into the palm of his hand. "Don't trust me!" he said, low and hoarsely. "Oh, Man-Man!" said Ruben, in his sad, merry voice that was no longer shaken by fear, and stepped close to the cowering man. It was no longer a human voice that came from the contracted throat of the Thing that looked with red, gleaming eyes at the virgin-minded boy: "Don't—trust—me!" And suddenly, the flames outside paled, and the room swallowed night from its four corners, until the blackness swirled together in the center of the room, like black waters from Hades. A last ray of light fell on a huge red paw and—a fleshy monster—it lifted itself in a blind and horrible pawing.

But of all this, we knew at that hour only the little that Wurmbrand was able to tell us. He stood in the center of the courtyard, surrounded by a ring of listeners, and his blind fingers wriggled in the air as he recited: "I ran," he said, "I ran when they went into the room." The sparks cascaded thickly, and the gaping crowd, the two hundred, milled uneasily in the courtyard. Among them were Fräulein Calé's whores—I noticed this only now—and for a moment, I saw 137, the soldier, standing close to the flames. His face was sharply illumined, and he was laughing uproariously. And now, many of them laughed—I did not know why or at what. But then I saw that the front wall of the rear-house had collapsed, and one could see the interior of fifty or eighty kitchens, rooms and corridors, heaped one above the other, one alongside the other, like boxes; the broken stairs wound their way crazily among them. There were no secrets left. What had been sheltered and treasured a hundred years, a hundredfold, now stood denuded and somehow orderly, like a toy shop, illumined by the conflagration; flames had stripped the things, warped them, discolored them, until only on an upper floor, in a small room, close beneath the sagging rafters, stood (and it could be plainly seen) an untouched round iron wash-stand, while the charred strips of wall-paper fluttered reddish above the heated air in the wind of the darkness. Oh, it was truly ludicrous, as when one unexpectedly sees some one pass along the street in his underwear. And so they all laughed, open-mouthed, their gargoyle faces lighted by the flames: the soldier and the camping women, the whole gaping crowd, including the whores, and even those whose house and home over there was going up in flame and smoke. They swarmed about like startled rats. One of the nodding seven raised his hand and spread his fingers and crowed: "The house is burning!"

At that moment, something was going on in the corner of the rear- and side-house. Twenty of them ran over—I among them. "We just heard him shout again," said one of those who had remained before the smoking entrance. And it was hardly a minute after this when we heard a coughing voice come roaring through smoke and scintillating gleams: "On the steps, God damn it! Water on the steps!" A few moments later, six or seven hose spewed a raging flood of foaming water into the hissing darkness; a searchlight flamed, and suddenly we saw smoldering banisters and swirling, white-gray-brownish clouds of smoke and cascades of swishing water, and, coming down the stairs, stumbling, falling, jumping, a blackened colossus, his clothes in rags, his shirt in tatters about his half-naked torso, two bundles in his arms: children, wailing, with reddened eyes smarting from the smoke; closer, close, laughing: Jablonski! He stumbled past us, five, ten strides, into the court and, still laughing, crumbled down on the flagstones, holding the children in his outstretched arms and shouting: "There!"

While we still stood around him, a woman came wading through the torrent down the stairs: Mirjam, her hair singed, her dress in ribbons—Mirjam, a child in her arms, a boy, his little arms tight around her throat and screaming shrilly. She reeled, staggered past us, staggered, the screaming boy in her arms, into the center of the courtyard, stood there and, as though she were awakening from sleep, turned slowly in a circle. A gentle woman with beautiful hair, a woman with two children—she was one of the women camping on Calé's stairs—came over. She took the boy from Mirjam's arm and carried him, calmly and impassively, back with her. Mirjam turned. She passed her hand over her brow and eyes, as though she were trying to convince herself of the reality of it all or as though she wished to wipe away the last traces of a nightmare. Then, she drew herself erect, and said —many heard it—to Jablonski: "Going back?" Jablonski nodded.

But no one paid much attention to that. There were other things. Over the smoldering stairway—the fire had been checked, the hose taken away and it was quite safe now to go up—a few men had disappeared into the house. "Everything is all right upstairs; only the stairs were burning," coughed Jablonski, still sitting on the ground, and he flapped his hands like a merry harlequin. A few laughed. "The police went up to the garret; they say a murderer is up there," a man said, and some one added: "Gutjahr told the police that he is up there." We stood and waited. Now, there was a continuous coming and going over the stairs. Many children were brought down and taken away. One of the men who had been upstairs told us: "Two were suffocated. Fifteen are alive. All in one room." Before he left again, he said, over his shoulder: "In the Meier woman's place, in the kitchen, there is another door. But it is locked." Across the way, in a corner, Wurmbrand, with florid gestures, was telling his story.

Then, the square-toes. Four of them came down the stairs carrying a body wrapped in a black cloth. All rushed over to them. "They've got him, the murderer!" said some one. The detectives said nothing at all; they were in a bad humor and roughly pushed through the crowd. They reported to the fire-chief: "No, not burned. No, the one we were looking for isn't up there. This one? Hung himself on the rafters. A skinny fellow, wearing glasses. A Jew." Stepping across the taut fire-hose, they carried their silent burden into the street.

No, there was no time now to follow separate happenings. The soldier was once more at my side and whispered: "Now is the time! Let us go up and get ourselves some clothes!" And without further words, on the pretense of desiring to help, we joined the others who were running up the stairs. (Mirjam and Jablonski were among them, but they did not see me.) As eight or ten of us were hurrying along the corridor of the second floor, the fire playfully, as a cat will do with a ball, sprang forward once again and dug its claws into the victim. The stairs suddenly flamed again. I saw a few hastily retreat down the steps. Smoke puffed up, and we scattered here and there and groped in the darkness for air and a means of escape. As for me, I do not know how many doors I pushed open and slammed shut. Rooms, kitchens, corridors, empty and deserted, were fitfully lighted by the gigantic torch which had once been the rear-house. In one of the rooms, shadowy ghosts danced on the old-fashioned, varnished furniture. I met 137 again. He had broken into a wardrobe and a dresser, and was about to squeeze himself into a suit much too tight for him. "Commandeered!" he called over to me. Outside, the flames crackled, flashing upon his grinning teeth. I broke open the drawer of a dresser, but found only some women's underwear, carefully laid away. In a box, I found a stiff, black hat, much too small for me. "Commandeered!" I said, and put it gingerly on my head. We laughed as we stood there, in this strange room with its strange family pictures behind frame and glass. The clouds of acrid smoke, drifting in from the corridor, driving us in different directions. Rooms, kitchens, corridors—I do not know how many doors I pushed open and slammed shut. I was carefree and charged with a wild rhythm. Then, I found myself in the Meier kitchen. I remembered the frosted glass door, leading into the large room. I threw myself into a chair and stretched out my legs. I happened to think of the soldier at his foraging, and shouted aloud: "Commandeered!" It was funny.

To the right was a heavy wooden door, shutting off the room that had been Rafael Meier's; the same room, I remembered, where some one I knew had thrown, yesterday or four hundred years ago, a burning lamp at a ghost. I saw this door plainly. I sat quite near, and the pale reflection of the fire flickered over it. Noiselessly, the knob turned. A tiny crack appeared. Some one was listening there. "Hey, there, brother!" I shouted. "Come out, brother!" I laughed. But no answer came. The crack widened. Darkness lay beyond it, and two glowing eyes. "Come out of there!" I laughed and flexed my muscles. In my trouser pocket, the knife clicked open. It gave a short, snapping, metallic click. The crack widened; a huge hand appeared, grasping the door, and a hoarse voice growled: "Never mind the knife!"

Crouching, the heavy creature crept out on tiptoe and his glittering eyes circled the room. "Anton!" I said, and had to laugh. "You!" he said, and it seemed to me as though he had difficulty in forcing the sound out of his throat, so hoarse and heavy came the one syllable. Crouching, he slunk out to the hall-door and listened. And when he once more turned his dull face my way and it lay in the light, I said: "Downstairs, the detectives are looking for some one who killed a profiteer." He raised his hand and waved my words away, as some one, deep in thought, might brush away a fly. "He killed a profiteer!" I said, and pushed the little, stiff hat onto the back of my head. A hand waved my words away. And now, when I saw this hand in the light, I noticed that it was sticky with something red. The man was leaning against the door. He stooped, not as if he were listening, but as if he were carrying a heavy burden. And then, he babbled out of a tight throat: "Many are burdened!" That was so ridiculous it made me laugh. I pushed back the stiff, little hat and laughed long and heartily. The man at the door raised his face, and his eyes flickered unseeingly past me. There was blood on his right cheek, too, and around his lips, and suddenly I noticed that his suit, gray-checkered, grotesquely up-to-date with its sewed-on pockets and tight-fitting waistline, was saturated with a reddish-black, sticky dampness. I pushed the stiff, little hat onto the back of my head and laughed. "You have been slaughtering!" I laughed, and nodded in the direction of Rafael's room. "You have slaughtered another one!" The stooped man at the door opened his lips and croaked: "No!" He raised his huge hand with spread fingers and said, chokingly: "No! That—makes—no one—happy." He gazed at his clumsy hands, butcher hands; gazed at them curiously, as if they were unfamiliar things, that did not belong to him. His face went blank, and he turned toward the corridor.

"Don't go down the stairs!" I called after him. "Detectives are down there!" He stopped, once more turned his face to me, raised his heavy hand and waved my words aside as though brushing away a fly: "The detectives"—he said thickly, and suddenly he pulled back his lips and showed his powerful, glistening teeth—"the detectives can—" He broke off. And after a pause, in a monotone and horribly calm, he said: "The whole world can go to hell!" Then, clumping noisily, he waddled off and disappeared behind layers of smoke into the darkness. I lay stretched out in my chair and waved the stiff, little hat after him. I had to laugh, laugh, while shouts came from below and the crackling of wood all around me rustled the silence. It was some time before I rose and once more went hunting.

I ran a race with the smoke. It was the smoke that made me drunk. Rooms, kitchens, corridors—I knew every corridor. Somewhere, I broke into a wardrobe. I did not find a coat, but a silk muffler. "Commandeered!" I said. "Commandeered!" I said, when I found a hand-bag with silver money. Outside, the fire crackled. Nothing was real. I ran a race with the smoke. And then, the fire-cat bit once more. The wall between rear- and side-house burned through. Every breach and gap spewed smoke, and behind it came little rivulets of dancing flames. I danced—I had to jump across them. The staircase to the courtyard was burning like straw, but the one to the attic was still intact. I took two or three steps at a time, and the stiff, little hat jumped crazily on my head. The garret lay dark, silent, untouched by flame. There I meant to cross over to the front-house, down, and out onto the street. I groped through rubbish and over cross-beams.

There was some one in front of me. A woman's hoarse voice called: "Jablonski? Jablonski, I can go no further! My feet won't carry me. There isn't a living soul in the house any more. Nothing to do, nothing to save! Jablonski, I must go down. It's getting near morning. I've got to get a little sleep. I must get down below to the courtyard, where the women are. We can get down through the front-house." The voice died out. I did not move. "You are tired, too, aren't you?" the voice asked. I felt how she listened into the darkness. The voice was very gentle when it said: "The boy is sleeping, now." And, very softly: "Jablonski, comrade! I thank you for everything, dear comrade!" Then, she seemed to catch her breath. A match flamed up and the stump of a candle burned. There stood Mirjam, her very tired, girlish-woman's face staring at me in the dim, flickering light. In the crackling of the fire—it crackled below, it crackled outside; the crackling was very loud by now—I stepped close to her and doffed my stiff, little hat and said: "A mistake! Just a mistaken identity!" I had to shout to make myself understood. "It is you!" she said, nodding shortly and without surprise. I swung my hat and wanted to laugh. But the bright eyes of the woman flitted over me, and she said: "You've been in jail! Just another unfortunate, stray dog!" I coughed—the smoke had made me drunk. "Doesn't matter!" I said, shouting loudly, for around us the fire crackled and the wild light came through a hatch in the roof. "Doesn't matter! Up or down, the wheel keeps on turning!" I shouted: "The wheel keeps on turning!" I waved the stiff, little hat and now I could laugh again. Her bright eyes scrutinized me solemnly. "Unfortunate, stray dog!" said Mirjam. She had placed her bit of candle on a box, and the calm flame illuminated a small circle of heaped-up rubbish.

There was a crib, upside down, stacked on a trunk. Picture frames. A bread trough. Two tin buckets. A broken chest. A huge flower-pot, with the stump of a palm. Three boxes. An iron wash-stand. Spider-webs, gray and ragged. Beyond crouched the darkness. The bright eyes looked at me; they did not see the rubbish. But I, oh, I stared at it! And suddenly, the memory of long ago clawed at me. And suddenly, I tore open my chest and dug my nails into my heart and cried, and all my fear and all my loneliness were in that single cry: "Mirjam!"

But out there, the beams were crackling. A house was burning down. And a man with a candle stood in the attic-door, in smutty rags, with smoke-blackened face and scorched hair. The man stood there, broad-shouldered and youthful, and laughed through the smoke. "Come, comrade!" he said. "There are still two children on the first floor—unconscious. Help me carry them down!" He turned, his white teeth gleaming through the soot, and coughed with a hack. The woman nodded. With him, next to him, at his side, the woman quietly went down the stairs in the candlelight and disappeared.

What is left for you? Grip the cudgel there and hit into that bit of candle on the box, so that the only light you see comes through the open hatch of the roof—the light of howling flames. What is left for you? The house is burning! So clump your way through the rubbish. Crush underfoot what comes in your way. The house is burning! Put on your stiff, little hat and take yourself away. The house is burning! March, man, and with your cudgel beat time in the darkness! The house is burning—shout your song! The house is burning—you will find the front stairs; go down the steps and back into the courtyard.

Yes, here were people. Here, one was sober once more; no longer alone. Here, the air was cool, with the coolness of the dawn. In the coolness of the dawn, the picture had changed. One hundred or two hundred people were still pressed close together, at the right, in the corner near Calé's stairway. The camping women were still on the stairs. Before the entrance, helpless and aimless, moved the twenty around Wurmbrand and Kurila; around them and among them milled, restlessly on the go, the curious, the night-faces, the whores. To the left, in the rear, the fire-fighters were apparently losing the battle. A lazily sweeping, strong breeze had arisen and dragged the flames across the roof of the side-house toward the front building. The water evaporated in the hellish heat before it touched the flames. The rear-house was by now a red-hot oven; here and there appeared black skeletons: the naked walls. In the side-house, the fire gamboled. Where I, short minutes ago, had stumbled through rubbish, flame danced upon flame. Through windows where a child had slept in bygone days—a child that now was stranger to me than a strange dog—through these windows, the blaze swooped unimpeded up to the rafters. Close by, behind a window, a first faint glow appeared; the window panes were still intact. Was not that a pale face pressing against the pane, eyes dark with dreams? Was that a green cord dangling down the wall into the courtyard? What was that crouching there? A ghost! Brush away all such fancies! Wipe the horror off your brow with trembling hand and howl! The house is burning! Howl! No. 137, the soldier, is frightening the women on the stairway; they jump and scream. The house is burning! Howl! Around Wurmbrand, the bats are fluttering and waiting for one who will not come. Of the nodding seven, the seventh with the gleaming eyes is feebly agitated; with his open hand, he points to the burning house and squeals, sobbing: "The house is burning!" And beyond, behind the flames, behind the night, a pale, gray dawn creeps up in the east.

Broad-toes in formation swarmed across the courtyard; among them, an agile person in an ultra-fashionable suit screamed excitedly and pointed again and again to the inferno. "There! There!" he screamed. I pressed closer with the rest and saw that it was Gutjahr. "There!" he screamed. "There!" Trembling with eagerness, he seized one of the hunters by the arm. And then we all saw it: some one was still in the house. Some one clattered his way through the blazing rooms on the ground floor. "There!" screamed Gutjahr, and fifty screamed: "Ooooh!" The one inside heard it. The one inside stepped up to a window—smoke swirled about him—and looked out. Only for a moment; when he saw the tense faces turned toward him, saw the chain of hunters, he dived back again and disappeared. Now, there was only flame and smoke, as before. But he had been recognized. "Anton!" shouted twenty. "Horak!" And now they came over from the corner, all of them, and stared into the flames and whispered, one to the other: "The murderer! They are after the murderer! The murderer is in the house!" Some one shrilled: "He has been burned to death!"

We all thought the same thing. The detectives, standing there in skirmish line, revolvers in hand, also thought so.

But suddenly, as if at a command, we were all silent. Wood crackled, flames roared; wood crackled, crackled. But then we heard crashes, heard some one stumbling as though he were fighting his way, and there, smoke-blackened, the head of a man appeared through the flames in a smoldering window frame on the first floor. He was wild-eyed and his gaping mouth breathed laboriously. "There!" screamed Gutjahr, and pointed and shook. And one of the officers formed a megaphone of his hollowed hands and shouted: "You! In the name of the law! Come down!" Was he laughing, up there? The face had disappeared. We in the courtyard were silent. We listened through the crackling. Inside, in the burning house, some one was moving about. We heard him stumbling. Then, all was quiet. And into the silence some one said, in a voice that was hushed, yet audible to all: "Now, now, he is burned to death!"

But once more, trembling, Gutjahr threw up his arm and screamed: "There! There!" The man was on the second floor, in the room that had been Rafael Meier's. Between intermittent flames, he came to the window for a moment. We saw wild eyes and a wide-open mouth shooting forward for a breath of air. Shots. The detectives had all raised their revolvers and were shooting. But the man up there—was he laughing?—the man up there dived back into the flames. We could see him in the room. We saw him bend down and lift something. He lifted something from the floor. He lifted a long, slack, dangling burden upon his shoulder. Some one screamed: "A corpse!" The revolvers spoke once more. But the man up there had disappeared behind flames. Through the burning house, he stumbled. Lonely, he clattered his way through the burning house. We in the courtyard, we listened silently, tensely, with lifted faces, and heard the din die out in the roaring flames. "Now—" some one whispered—no more. A few stealthily took off their caps.

On the burning roof, on the crackling roof, a hatch flew open and a Thing, smoke-blackened and scorched and half naked, pursued by a yellow-white flame, vaulted onto the eaves. Hanging over its shoulder, it carried some one that was dead. The Thing's eyes gleamed red. White teeth shimmered broadly in its charred face. It was howling. In the courtyard they were shooting, but no bullet seemed to touch it. The Thing up there among the flames howled laughter and waved its hand at us. It pulled itself along the roof, up, up, and dragged the body with it. Now, it straddled the smoldering ridge of the roof—rode the burning house as if it were a horse. "Oho!" it laughed, "oho!" and the sound crept up our spines. It had placed the corpse crosswise before it in the saddle and rode, rode. Smoke was all about it, and leaping flames. "Oho!" it laughed. Then, it raised the dead man and raised the dead man's face and showed it to us by the light of the flames: a peaceful, thin face of suffering, hanging slack over one shoulder and framed by black curls. "Ruben Feuerbach!" a shout went up. "Ruben!" they screamed. "Ruben!" they wailed. A white-haired woman, with her feet wrapped in rags, reeled forward, extending feebly lamenting arms toward the burning building. "Oho!" the Thing up there chanted, and rode and held the dead boy with its left paw. Tongues of flame licked at it. With its right hand, it tore blazing shingles off the roof; howling, it waved them like torches above its head and hurled them downward.

Then, suddenly, I was aware of Gutjahr beside me, holding a gun in his hand—a carbine. He lowered himself on one knee, as taught in the army. Carefully, he aimed at the Thing up there on the roof and pressed the trigger—only once. Whether he hit him could not be seen, for at that moment the roof caved in. The maniacal laughter and the hand waving the torch, the Thing and the dead boy, disappeared beneath crashing beams. They were never found. Many flames danced over them, and many flames roared their requiem over them before dawn brought silence.

THE fire had burned out by half-past four. At five o'clock, a factory siren yowled shrilly and three gave answer. At five o'clock, the day began. At five o'clock, the ghost had vanished. Three factory sirens yowled and ten gave answer. At five o'clock, I had a light-gray, modish suit and, mingling with the crowd, left the courtyard of the demolished house. Ten sirens yowled and the factories of the entire city gave answer. The sound awakened forgotten thoughts, and for the first time in hours some one mentioned the Orth trial and the demonstration. "They ought to be cut to pieces!" a bow-legged cripple said. The first to leave was Mirjam, with the women. The women started on their way. I saw them turn a corner determinedly and, with their children alongside, disappear down the street. The streets took on life. Working-men went by singly and in groups, in holiday spirit and bitter at the same time.

But the first to leave was Mirjam and the women. For the night-faces and the curious still found something to gape at, something to amuse them: Wurmbrand and Kurila and the twenty others were now, as it seemed, either raving maniacs or drunk. All of them, Wurmbrand and the three from the Salvation Army and the seven that nodded and the others, were now all like the old woman with rags around her feet, who had thrown herself toward the burning building, feebly agitated and in startled activity. With kindled emotions, waving their arms, they remained in the court amid the smoldering embers. Waving their arms, a startled horde, they scurried, leaderless, here and there and talked excitedly—talked to each other simultaneously, and with the name of Ruben on every tongue, they quoted from the

Holy Writ. One—he wore a cap—said: "It is written: And I shall be near you; although you have no eyes to see me, I shall be walking at your side." There were seven who nodded. There were seven who wept bitter tears. "Ruben!" said one. The seven talked, feebly agitated and feebly waving their arms. Some one said: "It is written: Where you go, I will be as a star before you; and when you seek me, I shall be as a light before you." And the seven sobbed, torn with happiness, and cried: "He lives!" No one knows who was the first of them to leave through the archway. Three by three, they walked and sang. When they passed me, I was standing in the street with the rest of the laughing crowd. I saw one of the first three, the one in the center, turn his head to a limping old woman in the rear, saw him wink at her with glowing eyes in his hollow face: "He lives! Ruben lives!" On they marched and sang. The curious and the night-faces and the whores trailed them a part of the way and turned back, laughing, and then the twenty, singing, turned a corner somewhere and disappeared.

This was at half-past-five. The factory sirens had long since ceased their howling. The march of the workingmen was rolling. But if one could have looked into the workings of the three huge machines—the Socialists, the police and the Communists—one would have noticed that, although each machine was functioning according to directions, the calculations of machine against machine had become disarranged. While the cogwheels of the different machines were interlocking, while the machines turned and moved—they turned and moved differently than was expected; demoniacally different, yet demoniacally exact, as if Fate, the juggler, had thrown over all existing equations and, with the turn of a hand, had built anew. There was not a hitch. Still, in the Socialist march, Division XIV was seven minutes behind in its schedule because a street-car had been off the track in Wassergasse. This brought it about that in the general line-up of the demonstration, the gas-workers under Henkel's supervision did not keep their place in the march ahead of the men from the electric works. Instead, they followed, four divisions behind, after the women of the postal service. In their place, in their position, now marched the extra workers and the youngsters with the standards. There was no hitch. But among these extra workers, Badele had planted his Communistic cells—always four men—who were there to protect the individual propagandists and the distributors of pamphlets on Bergstrasse. Since the extra workers passed Bergstrasse seven minutes before the appointed time, these pamphlet men found themselves without protection and, after a short fight, during which they were severely beaten by the street-car men, the police interfered and took them into custody, and at the same time arrested two motormen. And so the disturbance planned by Suvarov for the corner of Bergstrasse took place after all, even if for a different reason. There was no hitch. And as had happened with the pamphlet distributors, so the straw-blond member of the asylum group, who had been ordered to trail along from Bergstrasse to the corner of the Kirchplatz and there shoot into the air, had also fallen into the hands of the police. The demoniacal juggler loosened the safety catch of a policeman's revolver on this corner, when he sprang down from the elevated base of a lamp-post to make a report. True, the bullet did not go into the air, but into his thigh; but still there was a detonation. There was no hitch. By this time, the bright sun of July 15th stood above the horizon and the marchers—a broad, black, tramping mass—facing the east, squinting in the glare. They started their song; their standards fluttered and somewhere drums beat a rhythmic tattoo. They were young and exuberant; they waved up to the windows; a fat man split his trousers, and they laughed, all the extra workers, with the Communists among them, and the police on the street corner. They had set out to protest against a class verdict; they had set out to emphasize this protest; they had set out to protect their rights, but it did not matter greatly what happened. They were healthy; their standards fluttered in the wind; the sun was shining. They had set out because they had been ordered to do so—the rest did not make much difference.

Still, where Tuchmachergasse makes a turn, a half-grown onlooker planted, unseen, a thumb-tack beneath the saddle of the young mare ridden by a police officer, so that just as two festively attired boys passed with a placard bearing the inscription: "Down with the Police Government," the animal suddenly reared and the lieutenant, with a foolish look on his face, found himself the next moment on the asphalt amid a hastily scattering crowd that laughed derisively at him. And on Mantelgasse, one of the women from the postal service called "Shame!" at a cordon of police and the commander of this cordon, a fat inspector, pushed forward to arrest the woman: whereupon, five placed themselves in his path, and when the inspector punched one of the women on the breast so that she screamed, another one caught his saber between his legs so that he stumbled and lost his cap. Furious, he threw a woman brutally to the ground. Just then, a powerful man came from the sidewalk, carrying an iron rod like a cane. He came with the springy step of a trained athlete and hit the policeman in the face, so that he was hurled back among the women and fell heavily to the ground. Meanwhile, on marched the men. They marched, I say, while all this happened, half serious and yet in the spirit of an outing. Every one laughed, and the sun was shining and the standards fluttered and a trumpet blared a rousing marching song. Still, all this startled and alarmed the more sober onlookers. Here and there, a window, only now lined with waving handkerchiefs, was hastily, carefully, closed and when, at a street corner, a woman screamed (it was nothing—her hand-bag had been stolen) at least twenty fell out of the crowd and hurriedly disappeared around corners and into doorways. But the march rolled on and the sun was shining.

It was at this time that I, having run through the more deserted side-streets to overtake the big parade, now stood on the base of the Trinity Fountain in the Kirchenplatz. But a cordon of police began clearing the fountain steps, so that the renovated figures would not suffer at the hands of the mob. We remonstrated, solely because we disliked to lose our advantageous position, but they pushed us along the wedge of old houses, over the shortened Marktstrasse, toward Goetheplatz. At this time, I saw Mirjam on one of the streets leading toward Schillerstrasse—Mirjam, with her troop of women. The fifty women were hurrying along; they probably had been held up somewhere and were late. They rushed headlong, almost running, a small mob, bent forward, forward, most of them ragged, dragging their children, faces set as though their life depended upon their being on time, as though this was their only salvation, Mirjam, their leader, bareheaded, in advance. They hurried into the cavern of a side-street and disappeared.

I, with two thousand others, was crammed around this row of old houses, wedged in, as every one knows, to the left between Kirchenplatz and Kirchenstrasse, to the right between Goetheplatz and the continuation of Goethestrasse. At the edge of this wedge, where Kirchenstrasse and Goethestrasse form a sharp corner, is a three-cornered space that has no special name, and here the different streets combine and flow on through the wide Schillerstrasse into another quarter of the city—a triangle, therefore, if one discounts the insignificant, narrow side-street that, close to the outlet of Kirchenstrasse, branches away from the place and, running parallel to Kirchenstrasse, leads back into the working-men's quarters. According to the plan of march which the Socialists had posted with the police, they would come in close ranks through Kirchenstrasse to this triangle and from here, after listening to the conservative speech of a political leader, they would return through this narrow side-street into the suburb, where a mass-meeting would be held in the open field between the locomotive factories. This plan had been sanctioned by the police.

What the Socialists did not tell the police, what they even kept from the knowledge of their younger members, was this: after the meeting in this triangle, they did not intend to send the entire line of march through this narrow street. On the contrary, the more disciplined and trustworthy divisions—the metal workers and the men from the transportation—would advance, as though under the influence of spontaneous wrath, through Schillerstrasse to the building of the National Council. There, the Law Committee was in session and, the representatives of the Socialist party being in the minority, a little support from the street, a mob before the windows, would be of great moral support.

On the other hand, the police also had their secret plan. The majority of the stock of the locomotive factories, before which the second meeting was to take place after the return of the marchers to the suburb, was in the hands of Nationalists. These Nationalist stockholders feared that their machines might suffer at the hands of the exasperated proletariat and, at the last moment, had brought pressure to bear on the authorities, so that, in secrecy, a counter action had been prepared. The plan was to bring about an excuse—and that was easy on an occasion like this—for hindering the demonstrators from using the little street leading to the factories, and forcing them to the right into Goethestrasse and away from the factories into safe territory, where it would be an easy matter to scatter the individual groups. In accordance with this plan, there waited, ready, in the garage to the left, between the little street and the beginning of Schillerstrasse, a troop of mounted police that would have to advance only about twenty steps in order to close the narrow street; and it was also according to this plan that we onlookers were pushed toward Goethestrasse where, once they succeeded in forcing the demonstrators to take that direction, we would naturally be forced along into a less dangerous neighborhood. The street-cars were not running; and a long walk home cools—as they thought—even the hottest political passion.

And once more the cogwheels clutched without friction, but the machines went crazy on that day. They clutched in the wrong places. Goethestrasse, in the calculations of the police, should have been comparatively deserted; instead, it was black with marchers; and they were not marching away to the suburbs, but toward the triangle. They were isolated bodies of Socialists, altogether fourteen out of a hundred and thirty-seven; they were belated marchers, who knew that the demonstrators would later try to use Schillerstrasse instead of the narrow side-street, and who had therefore chosen this short-cut to be in the triangle in time for the mass-meeting. But that accounted for only the minority of these marchers. A multitude of outsiders, hangers-on, spectators, seeing the disadvantage of their small numbers, had joined their ranks and now grasped this opportunity of letting themselves be carried along to the triangle. And so it came about that we also, who had been herded from the Kirchenplatz, suddenly found ourselves marching behind red flags, tramping to the tune of a song, squinting in the sun, carried on toward the triangle.

The place was black with people. Not more than fifty paces away, I saw the garage and opposite it, on the corner of Schillerstrasse, the scaffolding of a building under construction, occupied by a dozen boys who had climbed there to view the spectacle from above. There we were met by a thin cordon of police. As they were too few in number to hold us back, they drew their sabers. In front of us were shouts and screams. Some one shot into the air, and I saw the policemen push into the crowd and drag him off. Shouts, screams. At the same time, I saw a troop of mounted police in a side-street, ready to attack. Some one whistled a signal: long—short—long. The warning was not necessary: about a hundred of us hastily stepped onto the sidewalk and became onlookers once more. We obscured ourselves hastily. There was a little street with a beer-shop on the corner.

All this happened much more rapidly than can be told. It was now only five minutes to six, and the vanguard of the Socialists' march was entering the triangle from Kirchenstrasse—not the men from the locomotive works, as Suvarov had calculated, but Division II of the transportation workers. At five minutes to six, in the triangle, the following took place: Between Kirchenstrasse and the narrow side-street was a kiosk, a wooden newsstand, belonging to a Communist war veteran. This kiosk was closed. During the night, the gray-haired man and B 52 had painstakingly sawed out a piece of the upper wooden enclosure facing the narrow street and the garage. The opening had the appearance of a ventilator. Behind the opening, but invisible from the street, B 52 and 14, who was in charge of the weapons, had mounted a mortar. A few of these, at the end of the war, had been brought from the trenches to the rear and had conveniently disappeared. This mortar had been loaded with about nine pounds of small firecrackers and was aimed at the spot where later the mounted police were to form in line. And while 14 mounted the automatic detonator set for four minutes past six, the gray-haired man went to see the newspaper vender. He had not appeared, and it was he who was to have been in readiness with a package of firecrackers, wrapped in a newspaper, which were to go into action in case the mortar should for any reason fail to function. He found the man in bed, sick with the grippe and raving in delirium. The gray-haired man looked around in vain for some one else, and met Jablonski before the smoldering ruins of the old house. And so it came about that Jablonski, at five minutes before six, a package wrapped in newspaper in his hand, stood in the vicinity of the closed kiosk in the triangle. An interesting spectacle met his eye.

From Kirchenstrasse, the transportation workers came marching with fluttering standards, with the sun in their eyes. Somewhere, a drum beating the rhythm. In Goethestrasse, jammed behind a thin cordon of police, was a mob of people, growing every minute. Some one shot into the air and three policemen dragged the offender away. Schillerstrasse was deserted. The side-street could not be seen: it turned abruptly. The double doors of the garage were closed. To the right, on the opposite corner of Schillerstrasse, a crowd of boys clung to the scaffolding of a building and waved. Before this building, at the end of the planked-in sidewalk, the tail of a line of women could be seen. They were apparently waiting before a door. "Mirjam!" murmured Jablonski, and nodded. He appeared very sober. The transportation workers had reached the center of the triangle. A drum rolled. They wheeled into a broad formation, and stood motionless. The drum was silent. From Kirchenstrasse, as far as the eye could reach, the stream of marchers still came.

At this moment, four of the five double doors of the garage opened. Jablonski saw approximately two hundred mounted police on prancing horses advancing rapidly out of the building and aligning themselves near the entrance of the narrow street, fronting the place four deep, the garage behind them. At their head, close to Jablonski, rode a very young, blond lieutenant. Between the horses and the marching workingmen, of whom more and more were coming from Kirchenstrasse, there was a strip of fifty or sixty yards of sunny asphalt. The church in Kirchenstrasse commenced to toll the sixth hour. Jablonski nodded. He involuntarily pressed the package closer in his arm. He nodded and murmured: "Four minutes yet!"

In front of the scaffolded building on the corner of Schillerstrasse, something came to life. A woman mounted a raised platform and talked—the distance was too great for Jablonski to recognize her. The women over there began to wave their arms and shout. And suddenly, the mob of women started to cross the free space between demonstrators and police toward the opening of the narrow street. Jablonski saw this and nodded. He knew that at four minutes past six, when the mortar spewed forth its fire-crackers under the hooves of the horses, they would be in the center of the empty space. Jablonski nodded and said: "Suvarov!" He placed his package on the base of the closed kiosk and ran. Along the front of the closed ranks of the demonstrators he ran—alone—over the sunny asphalt toward the women. Shouts fluttered about him. The marchers called to him. The police barked at him. The blond officer at the head of the column, his voice rising above the others, commanded him to halt.

This man saw Jablonski run toward the group of women, crossing the place against all orders. He saw the running man come up to them and shout peremptory orders. Officious! thought the blond officer. Some one trying to keep order! And he smiled. He saw the women stop, saw them turn and saw them, while the man was still urging them on, rush back to their starting point. When Jablonski arrived with Mirjam and the women and children at the planked-in sidewalk before the scaffolded building, breathing rapidly by reason of his sprint, he looked at his watch and said: "Five minutes past six! The machine in the kiosk doesn't work. I'll have to go back there, comrade!" He paused. Then, in a low voice, he said: "Think of me, sometimes!" Mirjam, very erect, the boy's hand in hers, did not answer. She stared fixedly at the opening of the narrow street. Suddenly, she grew very pale. "Look!" she gasped.

Out of the narrow street emerged a small troop of people, about twenty in all, three by three. Cripples, feeble men and women, feebly excited. Singing, unconscious of their surroundings in their singing, armored warriors of another world, they passed along the front of the horses, enveloped in salvos of laughter, toward the center of the triangle. They were so pathetically ridiculous that even the police neglected to stop them. An old woman with waving arms, her feet wrapped in rags, limping, staggered in the lead, a grotesquely spectral drum-major. On the empty strip of sunny asphalt, between the heads of the horses and the massed demonstrators, surrounded by laughter, they sang. Over at the scaffolded building, Jablonski, very pale, once more looked at his watch and murmured: "Eight minutes past six! God be thanked, the refuse doesn't work!"

He did not quite finish the sentence, for at the same moment there came a dull detonation. At the same moment, through a hole in the rocking kiosk, a package flew before the horses and burst. The tiny fire-crackers hopped here and there with sputtering flames and crackling explosions. Horses reared, threw their riders and sprang forward. Through the cloud of smoke and dust arising from the asphalt, the last thing one saw was the heads of these horses:

large, round eyes, insane with terror. Oh, the tramping and clattering! Dust rose lazily. For a moment, one could still hear the singing. There was nothing to be seen. Only much later came the screams . . .

AND you, man? By this time, your belly is filled with beer. A hundred and fifty of you are squeezed together in this stinking saloon, some of you dressed as if for a picnic, and some of you sailors, Rumanians or Bulgarians, from the ships in the river docks. You want drink? Drink! Wash a year of dungeon-air out of your throat! Those are whores preening themselves. What is that fellow saying? "They're shooting!" Close the shutters! Drink—and never mind the clattering feet of the fleeing crowd outside. Hell! The light of the solitary bulb over the bar looks sick. Seize a whore by the breast and drink! You are on an island, man! For you, Time stands still! Fleeing feet clatter outside. Let them clatter! Oho! For you, Time stands still! It is not your minute-hand that is being spun outside!

You, man? Drink! What care you that the two hundred police have abandoned the garage and run? On every street you can see them running, around every corner they scurry, the gaitered bastards! They crawl into their holes like rats. And now, the street lies smooth and bright as a bowling alley in the warm sunshine. The fleeing crowd is gone. Not a soul in sight. Only on the deserted triangle, across the bodies of twenty that were trampled underfoot, across five cadavers of horses, stumbles a tiny old man, a ghost, an apparition, who is three hundred years old and carries a peddler's little wooden box strapped upon his chest. Out of some cellar he has crawled, an alley, or perhaps out of the air. Across the corpses he climbs, across the twenty who were trampled underfoot. What is that he holds in his hand? A little rubber-man. It is filled with water, and when he presses it on the behind, it pisses. And when it pisses, he laughs. 'Ha-ha-ha-ha!' four short times. Across crushed corpses, he climbs over the sunny place and laughs four short times. But no one hears him. The street is deserted—smooth as a bowling alley, and not a soul in sight. And you, man—you drink!

Drink, and press the breast of a whore! Your Time is not ripening outside! Is some one talking to you? He says: "I am looking for sailors. Mine ran away. I have five. I need one more. Come along, man, if you want to! To-night, we go downstream to Galatz!" Hey, you, man—laugh! The skipper says: "And then to Odessa!" Hey, you, man—laugh and slam your fist on the table and shout: "Why not!" Why not, down the stream, once more down the stream and farther, as far as it please Him who lets the ball roll at will, without purpose and so horribly absurdly that the thought chokes you. Why not! Slink out through the back door, slink down to the river harbor, through alleys and in the shadows of silent houses, for it is not your Time that is ripening out there, where the deserted street glitters in the flaming sunlight.

Why not, man! Down, man, down the stream! Roll, ball, roll on, absurd and horrible! What care you, if the metal workers and the men from the transportation have stepped over the corpses and are marching? Not a sound but their *tramp, tramp.* A hundred men wide and a thousand men deep, they march along the street. Standards, standards, flutter over their heads. And two of those that were standing at the scaffolded building, two of those march in the tempo of the procession—a woman with auburn hair and a man with laughing eyes. Slowly, the hundred thousand march, mighty and silent. A single trumpet blares at the head of the vast procession.

You, man, crawl into the belly of your ship! It is pregnant with your future. Crawl into your bunk! Push yourself deeper into the stinking straw! Over there, outside, the hundred thousand march along the glittering street. But there is something in their way—a cross-bar of gaitered bastards with carbines. They raise their carbines and cry "Halt! Halt!" Silently, the hundred thousand march on. "Halt!" they cry. The mass tramps on in silence. The first shots whine over the heads, over the marchers, and drop three or four children from the scaffolding on the street corner. The little bodies tumble backward onto the asphalt, and only then the first cry is wrenched from a hundred thousand throats. Only a single cry. And then, once more the trumpet, shrill, blaring in the lead. Music! They tramp to the rhythm of a march. Standards flutter, standards! Always fresh masses come rolling along the street. They are singing! Over there, the first machine gun sputters. And now, a woman gropes for a man's hand, and she says: "Comrade!" Death? There is no death, when a hundred thousand march! They are singing! As yet, you cannot understand what they are singing. But the rhythm, the measured rhythm, alone swells your heart. The discordant, wild, piercing melody is near to bursting your heart, so that you shout, shout and tramp—shout, and let your standards flutter in the wind. In the wind . . .

THE END